

IN 1991, MORE THAN 150 RESIDENTS OF COUNCIL BLUFFS CONTRIBUTED THEIR IDEAS ABOUT THE CITY'S FUTURE IN A PROCESS THAT RESULTED IN A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR COUNCIL BLUFFS ENTITLED *A VISION OF COMMUNITY*. At that time, a new form of city government and its mayor were just gathering momentum, a campaign to finance a new public library had concluded unsuccessfully, the city accounted for a relatively small amount of total metropolitan area housing development, and many believed that the city had a negative image that inhibited its growth and prosperity. Yet, through the planning process, participants defined their hopes for the city and identified its substantial potential.

Since the publication of the *Vision of Community* document, much has changed. Council Bluffs' city government, once marked by divisions, has become a model of efficiency and accomplishment. The library, once a symbol of frustration, now stands in the middle of an attractive downtown streetscape. Council Bluffs has become a leading tourist destination and has developed admirable recreational facilities, including a growing trail network. The city has made major investments in the reconstruction of streets and infrastructure and has addressed a number of key transportation concerns. It has experienced the fastest rate of retail growth in the State of Iowa and now accounts for its proportionate share of residential development in its region. In short, the efforts of Council Bluffs' citizens have in many ways created a stronger city positioned for a new century.

The 1991 plan helped provide an agenda for major community initiatives. The completion of many of the plan's goals and strategies led the Iowa West Foundation, the Council Bluffs Area Chamber of Commerce, and the City of Council Bluffs to undertake an updated planning process, identifying a new and focused program for the next century. This document, *CB-21: A New Community for a New Century*, is the result of this process.

■ WHY THIS PLAN

Council Bluffs has accomplished a great deal since 1990. This plan is intended to build on this solid foundation of accomplishment to help create a new community for a new century. "Community" in Council Bluffs goes beyond the casual usage of the word as a synonym for a municipality. Rather, it implies the sense of citizens of a city who are "one with" each other – linked by common interest and experience as well as by place of residence. The health of each part of a true community is critical to the health of the whole. This plan was based on a participatory process that defined those features and

INTRODUCTION

issues which, if acted upon, could make the greatest contribution to the building of a new community. The *Vision of Community* plan of 1991 attempted to establish a foundation for a city that had many urgent needs. The city now finds itself in the enviable position of “raising the bar” to an even higher level of accomplishment. In many ways, this plan represents a challenge to Council Bluffs, a challenge that the participants in this planning process have presented themselves for the next century.

■ THE PLANNING PROCESS

This plan was developed through a participatory process involving a number of citizens of the city. A Plan Steering Committee, representing a variety of community interests, coordinated the process, which the Council Bluffs Area Chamber of Commerce managed on a day-to-day basis. Reflecting the many positive changes in the community since 1991, the committee prescribed a focus on strategic areas and projects, rather than the broad brush approach that characterized the 1991 document. Thus, the plan’s first task was to establish these key areas of community focus. This was done with the help of a series of community workshop meetings, held in different neighborhoods in the city. At the workshops, participants completed questionnaires that assessed various community systems based on their level of improvement during the last ten years and their current quality. They were also asked to identify the most important challenges facing the city during the next ten years and to define projects that should receive the city’s priority attention during the same period. Participants then worked in small, task-oriented groups to consider changes during the last decade, define key community issues, and identify goals and priorities. The Steering Committee then used this information to define seven specific issue areas that became the chapters of the city’s future agenda.

Following the issue definition stage, the Chamber and the Steering Committee appointed working groups composed of members with special expertise in each focus area. These expert groups met several times during the course of the planning process to present and discuss ideas and to review drafts of each plan section. The city’s Human Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) also arranged several meetings of its membership and was very involved in the planning process. The final plan integrates these varied points of view into a cohesive program for the Council Bluffs of the next century, creating a community that will continue to grow and to take advantage of the opportunities available to it by defining and acting upon its vision – a vision of a new community for a new century.

CB 21: A New Community for a New Century



A REVIEW OF PROGRESS

CB-21: A NEW COMMUNITY FOR A NEW CENTURY

A REVIEW OF PROGRESS



RailsWest Museum at the historic Rock Island Railroad Depot.



Top: Omni Business Centre
Bottom: Riverfront casinos

THE 1990S WERE A MAJOR PERIOD OF COMMUNITY ACCOMPLISHMENT FOR COUNCIL BLUFFS. This section reviews progress on the community fronts identified by the Vision of Community Plan. It identifies both accomplishments (+) and recommendations that were not implemented (-).

■ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1990, as now, economic development was a central community issue. The building blocks of the economic development strategy identified in A Vision of Community were Image, Entrepreneurial Development, Downtown Development, Tourism, and Population Growth.

Image

- + 1994 launch of "It's Happening" campaign.
- + Completion of substantial community projects, including the Dream Playground (1994), the National Western Historical Trails Center (1997), and the Council Bluffs Public Library (1998).

Entrepreneurial Development

- + Renewal of Economic Development Council's fund for economic development assistance.
- Reduced level of funding for assistance program.
- No implementation of an established business development structure or small business development program.
- + Creation of 7,000 new jobs in the county over a four-year period.
- + Progress on construction of a speculative industrial building.

Downtown

- + Development of streetscape program along Main Street.
- Downtown development plan has yet to be updated.
- + Completion and lease-up of Omni Business Centre in the former Midlands Mall.
- + Completion of the new public library.

Tourism

- + Emergence as a major tourism center with beginning of riverboat gaming.
- + Completion of National Western Historical Trails Center.
- + The Chamber and Rock Island Depot both offer visitor information centers.

CB-21: A NEW COMMUNITY FOR A NEW CENTURY

A REVIEW OF PROGRESS



Top: Nash Boulevard
Bottom: Valley View Trail

Population Growth

- + City is capturing 8 to 10% of metropolitan area residential construction.

■ TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The Transportation and Infrastructure section concentrated on the basic framework systems of the city. Major components of the strategy included Infrastructure Repair and Maintenance, Capital Development, Infrastructure Finance, Balanced Transportation, and Solid Waste Disposal.

Repair and Maintenance

- + More than \$25 million of investment in rehabilitation of storm and sanitary sewer systems.
- + Programming of an additional \$20.6 million for sewer rehabilitation during the next five years.
- + Major rehabilitation and addition of pump stations in areas with poor drainage.
- + Elimination of most combined sewers.
- + Emphasis on rehabilitation or reconstruction of city streets.

Capital Development

- + \$5 million expansion of city wastewater treatment plant.
- + Construction of Mosquito Creek sewer line.

Infrastructure Finance

- + Initiation of sewer connection fees and first use of Real Estate Investment Districts.

Balanced Transportation

- + Completion of major street segments, including Nash Boulevard, Valley View Drive, and Highway 375.
- + Funding secured for planning of Avenue G overpass.
- + Completion of preliminary plan for Interstate 29/80 reconstruction.
- Continued decline in transit ridership.
- + Completion of Wabash Trace and major segments of a citywide trail system.



Top: Western Historic Trails Center
Bottom: West Broadway

Solid Waste Disposal

- + Completion of citywide recycling center in 1997.
- + Substantial reduction of citywide solid waste stream.

■ ENVIRONMENT AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

This section considered the physical and urban setting of Council Bluffs and addressed enhancements to the quality of the urban environment. Its building blocks included West Broadway, Community Design Standards, Neighborhood Conservation and Development, the Riverfront, and Historic Preservation.

West Broadway

- + Burial of utilities and reconstruction of sidewalks.
- Little action on removal or redevelopment of deteriorated or obsolete buildings.
- Relatively little improvement in street landscaping, signage, or screening.

Community Design Standards

- Basis for urban design improvements still must be provided.
- Enhanced regulations for landscaping, signage, and buffering not implemented.
- + Improved regulations for development in Loess Hills adopted in 1997.

Neighborhood Conservation and Development

- + Increased residential rehabilitation activity.
- + Creation and operation of Community Housing Investment Corporation.
- Remaining need for improved neighborhood zoning enforcement.

Riverfront

- + Major development with construction of casinos.
- + Back to the River trail system in early stages of planning and development.

Historic Preservation

- + Development or enhancement of Trails Center, Mormon Tabernacle, and RailsWest Museum.
- + Establishment of Pioneer Research Library at Mormon Tabernacle.

CB-21: A NEW COMMUNITY FOR A NEW CENTURY

A REVIEW OF PROGRESS



Top: Ferndale

Bottom: New houses developed through the Community Housing Investment Corporation

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT

The housing and neighborhood development considered the conservation of both existing housing and identified neighborhoods as the essential building blocks of community. Elements of the plan's housing and neighborhood strategies included Residential Development, Development Financing, Housing Conservation, and Neighborhood Development.

Residential Development

- + Creation of the Community Housing Investment Corporation, leveraging construction of up to 20 affordable houses annually.
- + Typical construction level of 300 to 350 new units annually.
- Need to inventory and identify sites for development.
- Need to establish one-stop shop for development permitting.
- Funding limits on expansion of housing subsidy programs such as Section 8.

Development Financing

- + Completion of Mosquito Creek interceptor sewer.
- + Revision of cluster subdivision ordinances to permit innovative development.

Housing Conservation

- No working relationships or leveraged programs with lenders for housing rehabilitation.
- + Major progress in some rehabilitation target areas, such as Southside.
- + Establishment of rental inspection program.

Neighborhood Development

- + Development and approval of Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy.
- Limited neighborhood organization activity.



Council Bluffs City Hall

■ GOVERNMENT

When *A Vision of Community* was prepared, the strong mayor form of government was new to Council Bluffs. In the view of most residents, the new governmental form has been an unparalleled success. Components of government strategies in the 1991 strategic plan included Taxes and Budgeting, Citizens Access to Government, and Government Relationships.

Taxes and Budgeting

- + Substantial commercial development has broadened the city's property tax base.
- + The city has effectively made strategic investments which balanced reconstruction of existing facilities with growth-oriented projects.

Citizens Access

- + The *Vision of Community* plan has served as a framework for city and Chamber agendas.
- The original strategic planning committee has not had a follow-up function.
- Lack of a structure of neighborhood organizations.

Government Relations

- + Improved communication between city and county government.
- Few substantive or programmatic results of city-county cooperation.
- + Joint city / county / Chamber lobbying trips to Washington and legislative coffees for the community.

CB-21: A NEW COMMUNITY FOR A NEW CENTURY

A REVIEW OF PROGRESS



Top: Wilson Junior High School
Bottom: Campus development at Iowa Western Community College

■ EDUCATION

The *Vision of Community* plan placed a high priority on education and emphasized a high level of partnership among the city's educational systems. Components of the plan's educational strategies included Partnerships and Attitudes, School Finance, Special Programs, and Higher Education.

Partnerships and Attitudes

- + Completion of a comprehensive needs assessment for public school facilities.
- + Regular program of community input sessions on educational issues.
- + Increasing use of school-to-work partnerships.
- Continued difficulty in systemizing school-to-work and mentoring programs.
- + High level of cooperation among school districts and Iowa Western Community College.

School Finance

- + Voter approval of optional levy for facility rehabilitation for Council Bluffs Community Schools.
- + Rehabilitation of Wilson Junior High School and two elementary schools.
- + Approval of major facility bond issue by Lewis Central district.
- Continued concerns about equity among Iowa school districts.
- Continued obstacle of 60% bond majority requirement for school finance.

Special Programs

- + Implementation of all-day kindergartens in 1996-97.
- + Preschool expansion from five to nine schools.
- + Continuation of technology transformation programs.
- + Implementation of K-12 talented and gifted programs.

Higher Education

- + Establishment of a regents' center in Council Bluffs.
- + Continued growth of the Iowa Western campus.



Top: Children's Square campus development

Bottom: Jennie Edmundson Hospital

■ HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES

The *Vision of Community* plan envisioned the emergence of a human service network that helps all residents reach their potential. The categories for strategies for reaching this overriding goal of inter-related human services included Human Productivity, Health Care, Child Care, and Service Delivery and Access.

Human Productivity

- + Continuation of drug and substance abuse prevention programs at all levels of the community.
- + Implementation of youth service programs, such as CJ Futures, on at least a pilot basis.
- Continued presence of significant substance abuse problems.

Health Care

- + Improved access to affordable health-care programs for small businesses.
- + Establishment of a pre-natal clinic by Jennie Edmundson Hospital and Visiting Nurse Association.
- + Reasonable recent success in recruiting health care professionals.
- + / – Finalization of operational alliances between local hospitals and metropolitan area health systems.

Child Care

- + Implementation of EvenStep Program for disadvantaged families by school system.
- Continued limited access of affordable child care to low and moderate income families.

Service Delivery and Access

- + Institution of accessible service on Metro Area Transit routes.
- + Progress toward one-stop service location by Pottawattamie Department of Human Services.
- + Progress toward expansion of senior center, possibly with associated senior housing.
- + Completion of Children's Square campus plan and facility improvements.

CB-21: A NEW COMMUNITY FOR A NEW CENTURY

A REVIEW OF PROGRESS



Top: Harveys Recreation Complex
Bottom: Katelman Pool

■ QUALITY OF LIFE

Positioning Council Bluffs as a great place to live was an important overall goal of the *Vision of Community* plan. Quality of life issues are particularly important because of the need to compete successfully for residents with Omaha and neighboring communities. Strategy components relating to quality of life issues included the Library, Parks and Recreation, and Arts and Culture.

Library

- + Completion of the new public library in 1998 as a centerpiece for the city's cultural environment and a focus for downtown.

Parks and Recreation

- + Completion of park master plans for Katelman/Sunset and Dodge Parks.
- + Substantial development of the Harveys Recreation Complex.
- + Completion of significant segments of the city's trail system, including the Valley View/ISD Trail and a trail from Lake Manawa to the Trails Center.
- + Initiation of the Back to the River Trail planning process.
- Lack of a citywide park inventory and master plan
- Lack of a Youth Programming Advisory Council.

Arts and Culture

- + Continued vitality of Bluffs Arts Council and local arts groups
- + Planning and financing for a performing arts center at Iowa Western Community College.

CB 21: A New Community for a New Century



THE ISSUE DEFINITION PROCESS

THE ISSUE DEFINITION PROCESS

ISSUE IDENTIFICATION SURVEY

BECAUSE OF THE CITY'S RECORD OF ACCOMPLISHMENT SINCE THE COMPLETION OF THE *VISION OF COMMUNITY* PLAN, THE CB-21 PLANNING PROCESS WAS DESIGNED TO PROVIDE A FOCUS ON SPECIFIC AREAS OF CONCERN AND DEFINABLE PROJECTS FOR THE CITY'S FUTURE. The initial part of the process used community surveys and working groups to evaluate issues, examine areas of improvement, and define directions for future attention. This section summarizes the results of this community participation process.

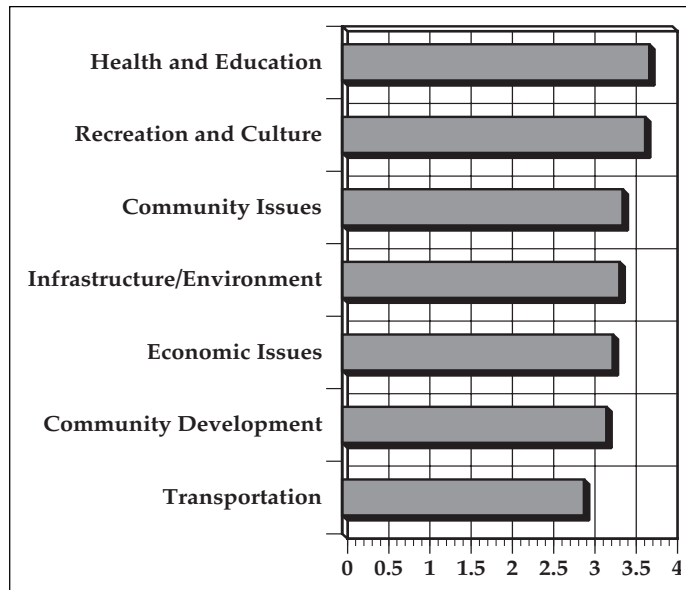
The initial issue definition process included a program of four community-wide planning workshops, held in different parts of the city. These were supplemented by two additional groups that addressed specific interests, such as economic development and human resources. Workshop participants completed an issue definition survey that assessed the quality of key community systems and identified major community issues and directions for the next ten years. They also worked in small groups at the workshops, tasked with identifying specific projects and areas of concern for the next ten years.

■ THE ISSUE IDENTIFICATION SURVEY

Participants ranked 51 community systems and features on a "5" to "1" scale, assessing each issue for "quality" and "level of improvement" during the last ten years. These 51 systems were grouped in one of seven broad issue areas: Transportation, Recreation and Culture, Economy, Community Development, Community Issues, Health and Education, and Infrastructure and Environment. Scores were aggregated to produce an average score for each system.

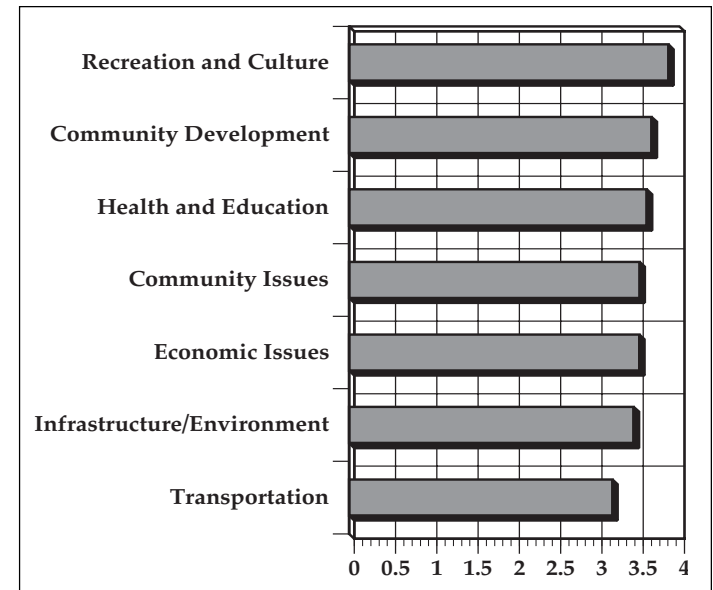
Participants gave highest rankings to the general categories of Health and Education and Recreation and Culture. However, only Transportation received an aggregate ranking below 3.0, the middle rating. Participants perceived most systems to be improved during the last ten years. They considered Recreation and Culture to be the most improved system, closely followed by Community Development and Health and Education categories. Again, only Transportation lagged significantly behind the other categories.

The following pages illustrate the perceptions of participants in the planning process toward the quality and level of improvement of various community systems.



QUALITY OF GENERAL ISSUE AREAS

Community systems that group together under the category of Health and Education and Recreation and Culture received the highest average rankings, with an aggregate score above 3.5. This suggests that participants rated these systems as significantly above average. Only Transportation received an aggregated ranking below 3.0 on a "5" to "1" rating scale.

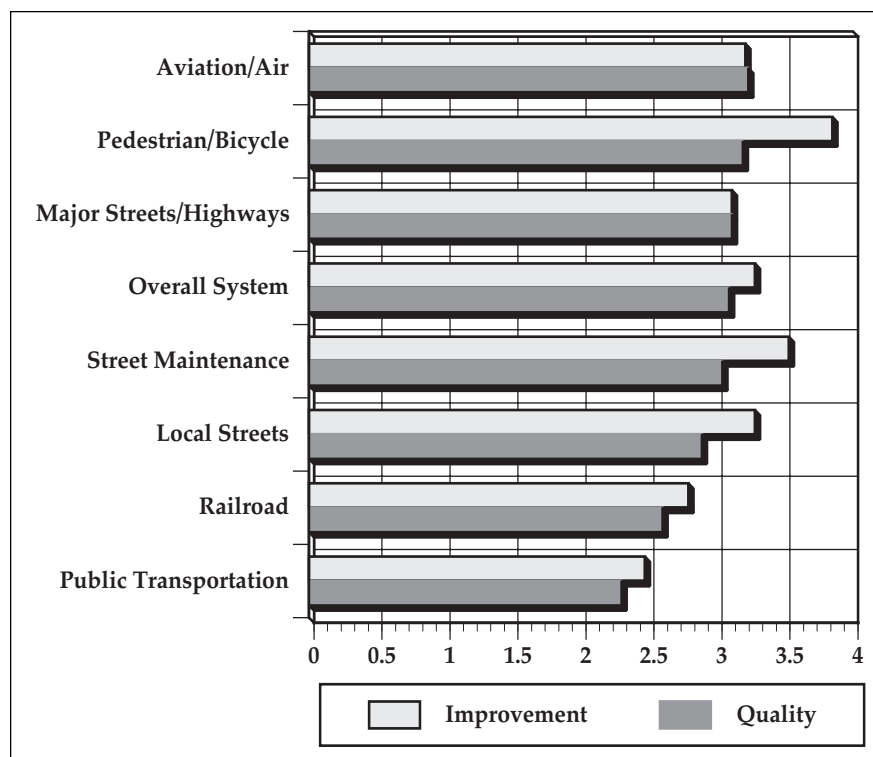


IMPROVEMENT OF GENERAL ISSUE AREAS

Recreation and Culture ranked as the most improved general issue area, with the construction of the new public library ranking as the major accomplishment. Community Development, Health and Education, Community Issues, and Economy also received aggregated scores at or above 3.5, marking them as areas of substantial improvement. No general issue area received an aggregated rating below 3.0.

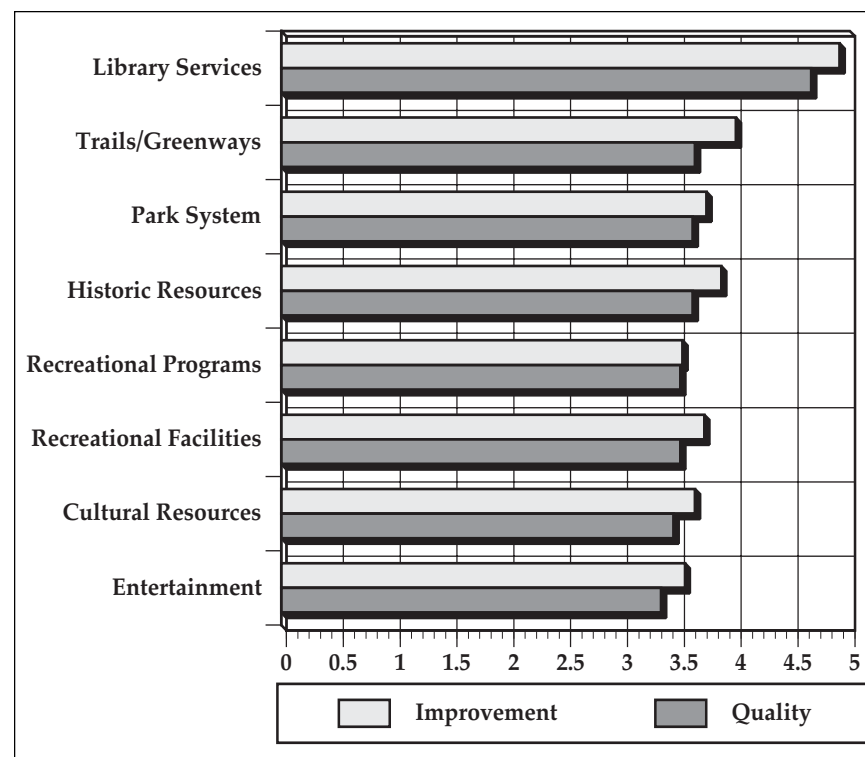
THE ISSUE DEFINITION PROCESS

ISSUE IDENTIFICATION SURVEY



TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

Participants gave the highest quality ranking among transportation systems to Council Bluffs' access to air service, followed closely by pedestrian and bicycle transportation. Local streets, railroads, and public transportation received quality ratings below 3.0. Most improved systems included the pedestrian and bicycle network, street maintenance, and the local street system.

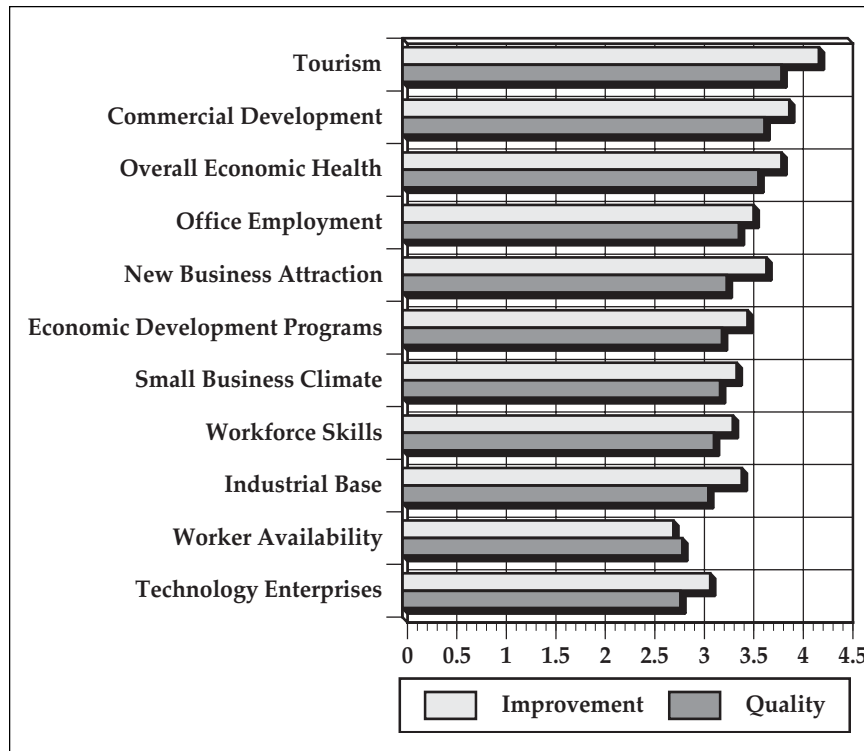


RECREATION AND CULTURE

Library services ranked as both the highest quality and most improved recreation and culture system. All systems received aggregated scores above 3.0 for quality and 3.5 for improvement. Other systems ranking above 3.5 in quality included trails, the park system, historic resources and recreational facilities and programs. Major improvement was noted in trails, historic resources, and recreational facilities. Recreation and culture emerged as a major community strength in this perception survey.

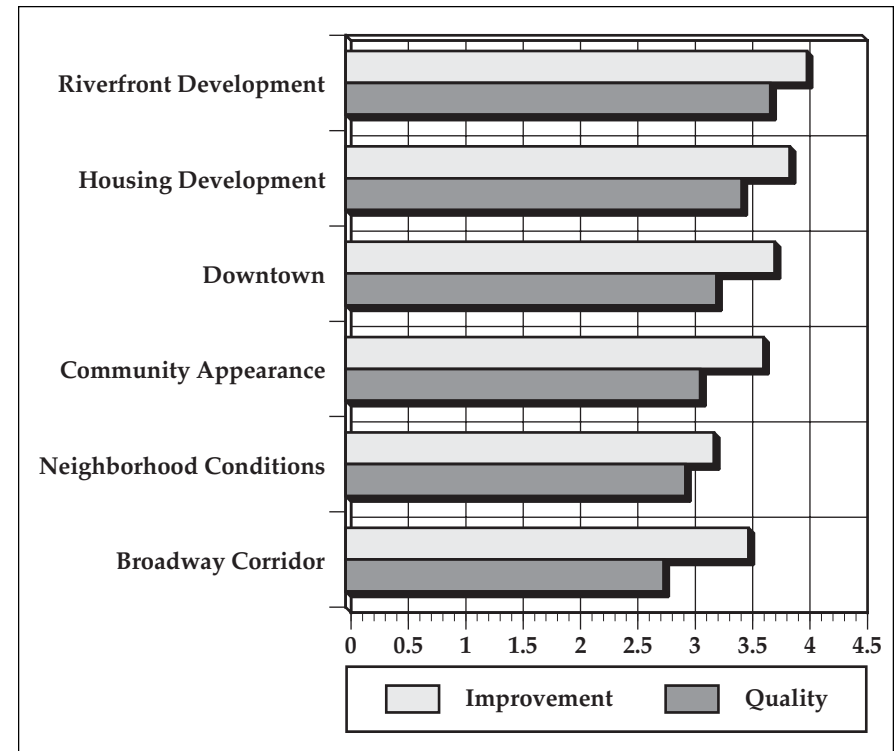
THE ISSUE DEFINITION PROCESS

ISSUE IDENTIFICATION SURVEY



ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

Participants rated tourism as both the highest quality and most improved economic system. Features that received a quality rating above 3.5, marking them as major community strengths, also included commercial development and overall economic health. Significant perceived weaknesses included worker availability and technology enterprises. In addition to tourism, systems that were considered highly improved include commercial development, overall economic health, and new business attraction.

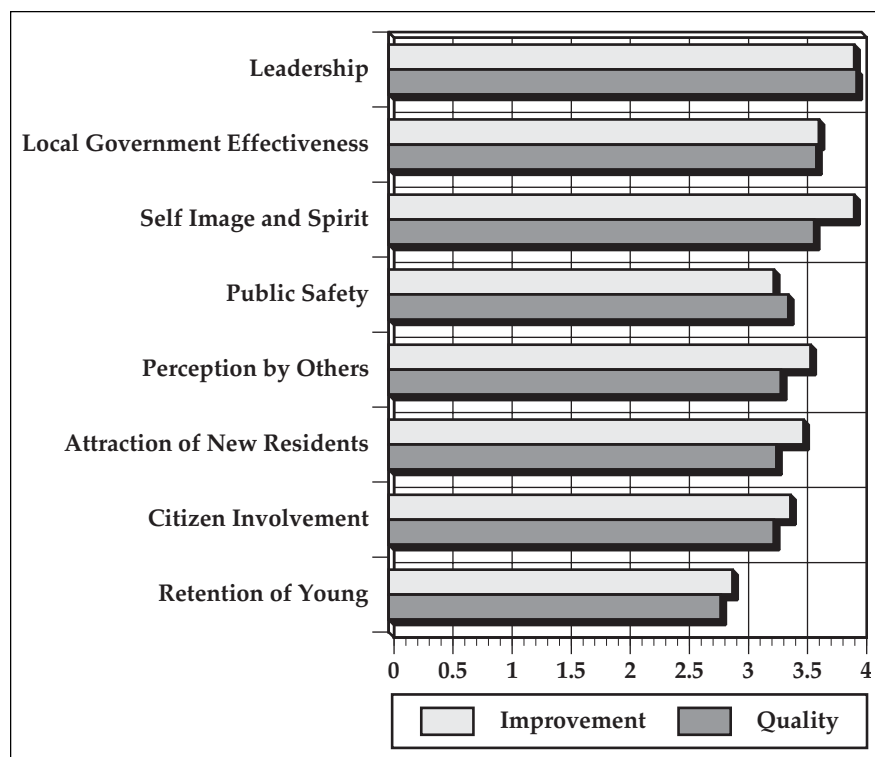


COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Riverfront development ranked as both the highest quality and most improved community development system, largely related to the construction of the casinos during the 1990s. Housing development, downtown, and community appearance also were rated as improving significantly. The West Broadway corridor received the lowest quality ratings, although survey participants reported significant improvements during the last ten years.

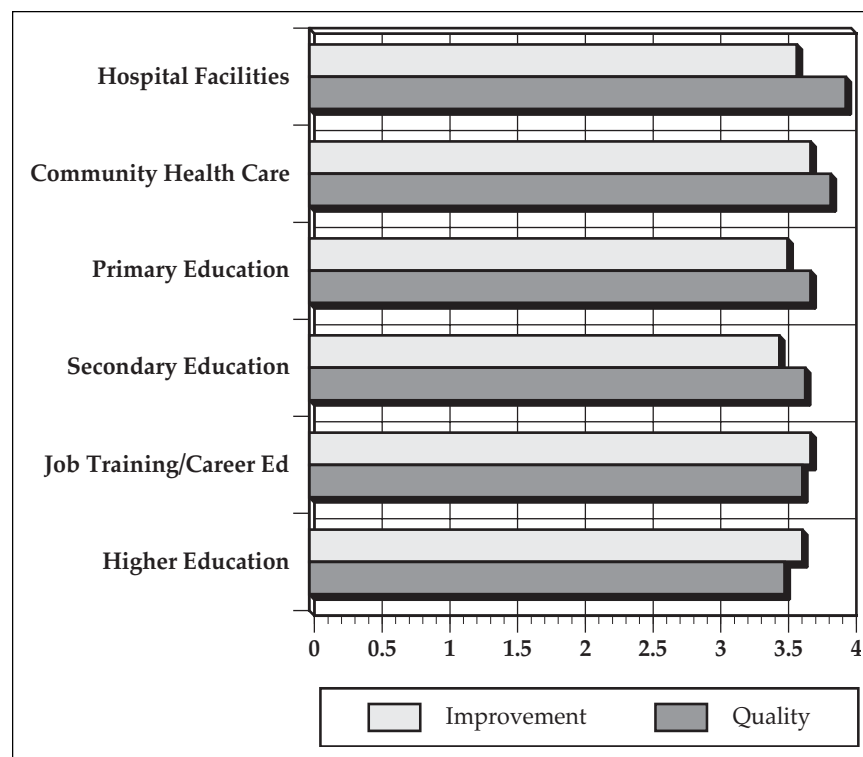
THE ISSUE DEFINITION PROCESS

ISSUE IDENTIFICATION SURVEY



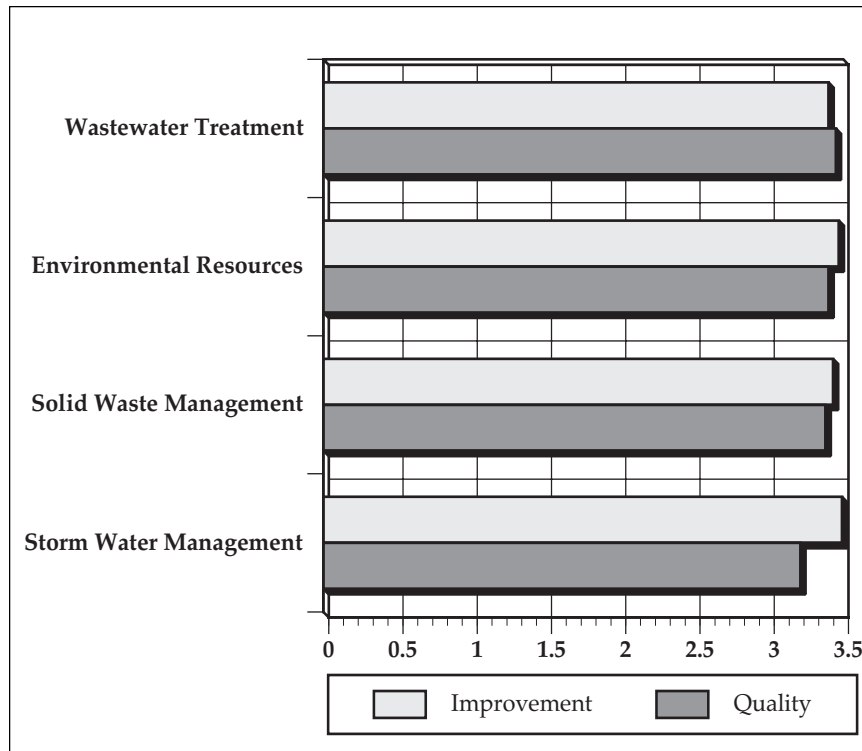
COMMUNITY ISSUES

Government and leadership issues were major areas of community growth during the 1990s. Community leadership, effectiveness of local government, and self-image all received aggregate scores of 3.5 and above, making them substantial community strengths. Participants also rated these systems as exhibiting the greatest improvement during the last ten years. Retention of young people ranks as a substantial community issue for the next decade, receiving an aggregate score below 3.0.



HEALTH AND EDUCATION SYSTEMS

Health care and educational systems were consistently rated highly by participants. Hospital and community health-care facilities received the highest ratings, but educational systems were close behind in quality. All systems were credited with strong levels of improvement during the last decade.



INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

Participants generally rated infrastructure systems as satisfactory, giving the highest quality rating to environmental resources and the lowest to storm water management. All systems registered substantial levels of improvement during the last decade.

CHALLENGES AND PROJECTS

In non-prompted questions, the survey asked respondents to identify major challenges and projects for Council Bluffs during the next ten years. Major challenges (in order of frequency) included:

- Economic development, with emphases on employee skill development and economic growth.
- Crime issues and drug prevention.
- Community appearance and neighborhoods, with emphases on neighborhood appearance and the West Broadway corridor.
- Schools and education, with an emphasis on facility improvements.
- Infrastructure, emphasizing maintenance of community services and improvement to the Interstate system.
- Housing, emphasizing development of affordable housing.
- Human resources.
- Environmental protection, especially conservation of the Loess Hills.

Major projects mentioned by individuals included:

- Financing and implementing necessary school improvements.
- Redevelopment of blighted areas.
- Maintaining street and infrastructure maintenance efforts.
- Workforce development efforts.
- Diversification of the city's economic base.
- Improving community image.
- Revitalization and improvement of the West Broadway corridor.
- Developing a local history museum.

THE ISSUE DEFINITION PROCESS

WORKING GROUP PRIORITIES

The final component of the issue identification process organized workshop participants into seven small working groups. Each group was charged with developing a list of priority projects for the city during the next ten years. The reports of the working groups were recorded and compared. The following priorities were identified independently by more than one of the seven working groups; the number of groups that identified each priority project is indicated in parentheses.



The West Broadway corridor

Improvement of this and other community arterials was a priority for each working group during the issue identification process.

- Development and improvement of West Broadway and other corridors (7)
- Implementing a financing plan for school facilities (5)
- Expanding community job skills training programs (4)
- Providing diversified economic development programs (4)
- Improving the city's transportation system with projects such as an Avenue G viaduct, a 9th Avenue viaduct, an east-west corridor across the north side of the city, and improvements to other minor arterial and collector streets (4)
- Housing redevelopment and neighborhood revitalization programs (3)
- Historic preservation programs (3)
- Preservation of the Loess Hills (3)
- Expanded youth development programs (3)
- Improved senior services, including health care and housing (3)
- Reuse of the former city library (3)
- Sewer improvements (3)
- Reconfiguration of the city's railroads (2)
- Development of the Haymarket District (2)
- Redevelopment of the area under the West Broadway viaduct (2)
- Neighborhood-based pride programs (2)
- A Council Bluffs museum (2)
- Improvements to the interstate system (2)
- Riverfront development (2)
- Improved public transportation (2)
- Cultural development, including a performing arts center and a calendar of events (2)
- Upgraded local health services (2)
- Stronger articulation of interests and image in Des Moines (2)
- Increased technology jobs (2)

WORKING GROUP PRIORITIES

- Increased tourism (2)
- Improved cooperation and mutual support with Omaha (2)
- Industrial park development and construction of a speculative building (2)
- Merging or administrative streamlining of school districts (2)
- Increasing interagency and intergovernmental partnerships (2)
- Continuing growth for Iowa Western Community College (2)



Left: The Loess Hills. Preservation of this unique environment was a priority defined during the planning process.

Right: The Haymarket District. Many participants saw substantial potential for continuing development of this historic district.

■ DEFINITION OF ISSUE AREAS

The results of the issue identification process were then used to define specific focus areas, which become the structure for the CB-21 Plan. These areas, defined with the assistance and agreement of the Plan Steering Committee, include:

■ **COMMUNITY FRAMEWORK**, establishing a growth and development concept for Council Bluffs and establishing the basic transportation, parks and open space, infrastructure, and community investment frameworks necessary to support the development concept.

■ **CORRIDORS AND COMMUNITY ENTRANCES**, considering the design and development environ-

THE ISSUE DEFINITION PROCESS

DEFINITION OF ISSUE AREAS

ment of Council Bluffs' major transportation and community corridors.

■ **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**, considering projects and programs to diversify the city's economic base, improve the quality of the community's work force, and continue the economic growth of the 1990s.

■ **EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING AND FINANCE**, considering the funding of the city's educational infrastructure and future directions for educational efforts.

■ **POPULATIONS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**, considering human resource and services issues in Council Bluffs.

■ **HOUSING**, considering the development of housing and supporting public improvements, and focusing on delivery systems necessary to produce affordable housing.

■ **NEIGHBORHOOD BUILDING**, considering the health of the city's neighborhoods as quality environments for city life.

Working Committees

Each focus area was developed by a corresponding working committee, composed of people with special insight and expertise in each area, to develop the succeeding portions of this plan. Each committee carried out sessions to develop ideas and concepts for their respective area, and to review drafts of each chapter. The main findings and directions of the strategic planning process follow.

CB 21: A New Community for a New Century



COMMUNITY FRAMEWORK

COMMUNITY FRAMEWORK

DEVELOPMENT AND LAND USE



*Top: New apartment development.
Bottom: Single-family construction.*

THE COMMUNITY FRAMEWORK COMPONENT DEFINES FUTURE COMMUNITY GROWTH DIRECTIONS, ALONG WITH THE TRANSPORTATION, OPEN SPACE, AND INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORKS NECESSARY TO SUPPORT THEM. While Council Bluffs will grow larger geographically, this growth should provide linkages to assure that Council Bluffs grows together rather than apart.

■ DEVELOPMENT AND LAND USE

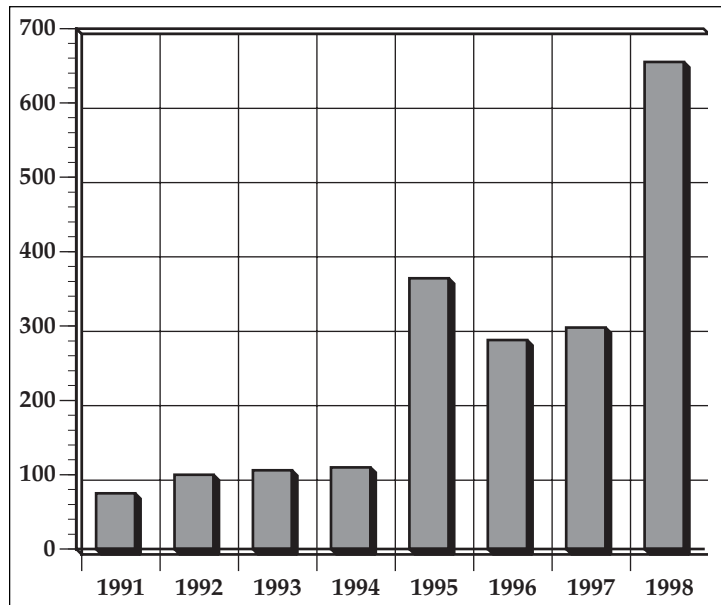
Residential Growth

At the beginning of the decade, Council Bluffs accounted for far less than its proportionate share of metropolitan area growth. Since then, the city has experienced an expanded residential development market. The city now produces about 300 to 350 new housing starts per year. Several factors account for this increased level of growth, including:

- Major improvements in the image and quality of vital community systems in Council Bluffs, including education, government, and quality of life issues.
- Substantial investment by the city in new and rehabilitated infrastructure.
- Increasing employment within the city.
- Continued decentralized development patterns in the Omaha metropolitan area, increasing traffic congestion and causing new suburban neighborhoods to be farther from employment in Downtown Omaha. This strengthens Council Bluffs' competitive position.
- Attractiveness and marketability of Council Bluffs' environmental assets, including its hill neighborhoods.

The majority of recent growth has occurred on the eastern side of the city, generally east of the Interstate 80 corridor. Major assets that have attracted development here include nearby available services, such as the Mall of the Bluffs and the Manawa Power Centre complex, attractive landforms, quality schools, and relatively convenient transportation connections to the rest of the metropolitan area by

way of the interstate system. Much of this development is clustered in buildable parts of the hills. The new development of FoxRun is an effort to open a new growth center in the community.



New housing units in Council Bluffs, 1991-1998. In 1991, 75 new housing units were built in the city. In 1998, permits were taken on 655 new units. Single-family construction increased from 63 to 165 units.

Continuation of this level of residential growth will result in construction during the next ten years of up to 3,500 units of new housing. Assuming that about 60% of this development will be single-family housing, Council Bluffs has the potential to absorb between 800 and 1,000 acres of new residential land during the next ten years. In this growing metropolitan area, new development can also create a self-fulfilling future of growth, attracting new population because of the presence of new residential settings. However, planning for growth faces some significant challenges, including:

- *Topography in development areas on the east side of the city.* Landforms cause development to cluster in buildable areas surrounded by steeper slopes. While this development pattern is desirable and conserves environmentally sensitive hills, it prevents interconnection of subdivisions and limits gross densities. This in turn spreads development out farther and increases infrastructure costs by reducing the number of lots that can be served by sewer extension.
- *Drainage.* Other areas that provide development opportunities are very flat and frequently experience drainage problems.

Commercial and Office Development

Council Bluffs has experienced major commercial growth since 1990, giving the city the highest proportionate increase in retail sales of major Iowa cities. The Manawa Power Centre development of big box retailers and supporting businesses near the Iowa 192/Interstate 29/80 interchange, combined with the continued strength of regional retailing at the Madison Avenue interchange, has accounted for the largest share of this new commercial development. These patterns have resulted in a long-term shift in the city's retail center from the Broadway/Downtown corridor to the more peripheral Interstate 80 corridor. Despite this shift, West Broadway has maintained its status as a major community commer-

COMMUNITY FRAMEWORK

DEVELOPMENT AND LAND USE



Manawa Power Centre

cial corridor. Additional commercial growth during the next ten years will be generated by:

- *Probable future population growth.* Development of an additional 3,000 housing units can increase the city's population between 2000 and 2010 by up to 8,500 people. This will generate a demand for up to 85 acres of additional commercial land, or about 850,000 square feet of new commercial space.
- *Increased regional market share.* Increased commercial development will continue to attract customers from the southwest Iowa region and from eastern parts of the Omaha metropolitan area.
- *Evolution of commercial development.* Natural changes, expansion, and relocation of commercial development produces an ongoing demand for new space.

Council Bluffs has been considerably less successful at attracting new office development. Most recent office development has occurred in the city center, largely the result of the conversion of the former Midlands Mall into the Omni Business Centre. However, the city lacks contemporary business or office parks, causing it to lag seriously behind other parts of the metropolitan area in this vital employment and development sector.

Industrial Development

Industrial development has experienced shifts and changes since 1990, creating a dynamic situation with significant opportunities. Some of the city's older, heavy industrial precincts, such as the district south of 9th Avenue and east of Indian Creek, have experienced continued obsolescence and increased vacancy. Farther to the east, the growth of ConAgra's facilities in the city have created a stronger industrial presence south of downtown. The area between Interstate 29/80 and South Omaha Bridge Road from Iowa 192 to Indian Creek has also experienced significant industrial growth. The western part of this district is in the process of new industrial park development.

On the other hand, industrial and distribution growth has not taken full advantage of Council Bluffs' superb locational and transportation assets. The area between the Union Pacific mainline and yards

and Interstate 29/80 is especially strategic for industrial growth.

Development Objectives and Directions

Objectives for new development in Council Bluffs during the next ten years should be to:

- Provide adequate land with supporting public services to accommodate the city's potential for new residential growth.
- Establish development areas which distribute growth around the city and discourage single-directional sprawl to the east.
- Create a quality office/business park location to balance residential development and take advantage of the city's transportation and physical assets.
- Utilize the city's locational assets to encourage contemporary industrial development oriented to light industry, technology development, and distribution facilities.
- Encourage an efficient pattern of community development by using sites within the city to their maximum advantage.

Growth Directions

The strategic plan identifies several directions and priorities for new growth. These in turn should help to focus future public investments and priorities. These growth focuses include the following:

East Development Area: This continues current growth directions and generally includes a corridor between Highway 92 and Greenview Road east to South 220th Street; and north to McPherson Avenue north of Greenview Road. Growth in this scenic and hilly area will be clustered in developable enclaves surrounded by steep slopes. Policies and improvements in this area should include:

- Continuing Greenview Avenue west to Valley View Drive.

COMMUNITY FRAMEWORK

GROWTH DIRECTIONS



Fox Run Golf Course

- Providing adequate sewer services into areas developing at urban densities.
- Encouraging development design which maintains sensitive environments and slopes. Conservation development techniques, which maintain a project's overall development density by permitting smaller lots in exchange for conserved open space, may be used in these areas. Generally, development should occur along fingers of buildable areas, avoiding heavily wooded and erodible slopes.

South Omaha Bridge Road Corridor: This area, outside the city's principal growth direction, includes developable land and a number of important assets, including the Missouri Riverfront, Lake Manawa, a location very convenient to Downtown Omaha and to other metropolitan employment centers, the

The South Omaha Bridge Road corridor. Upgrading the corridor to parkway standards and innovative planning can help this strategic growth area develop as a "new community." New development should take advantage of major recreational and environmental amenities, including the Missouri River, Lake Manawa, and Harveys Recreation Complex, as well as the area's superb access to all metropolitan area employment centers.



Western Historic Trails Center, and Harveys Recreation Complex. The Fox Run development represents the first higher-cost housing initiative in this strategic area. Areas north and south of South Omaha Bridge Road may lend themselves to different types of residential growth. A key to developing this area will be to enrich it with substantial amenities. Policies to enhance development potential in this area include:

- Upgrading the South Omaha Bridge Corridor. South Omaha Bridge Road (Highways 275 and 92) should be upgraded to parkway standards when improved, including extensive landscaping and adjacent greenway and trail development. Along with this, obsolete or blighted commercial or industrial uses should be redeveloped. New development should incorporate high design standards, including extensive landscaping, well-designed signage, and good building design.
- Providing greenway connections between residential development areas and neighboring environmental assets, including the Missouri River and Lake Manawa.
- Expanding and developing public open space along the Missouri River as part of the Back to the River project.
- Expanding Twin Cities Park into a larger neighborhood park sufficient to serve the local needs of a developing area. Adjacent development should be designed with a greenway link between this park and riverfront development.
- Reserving and building local traffic ways and collector streets, including a loop consisting of extensions of South 24th and South 35th Streets, and 56th Avenue as development requires.
- Solving drainage problems in this flat river valley area.

Lake Manawa Area: Significant development opportunities occur in the area south of the Lake Manawa Power Centre and west of Mosquito Creek. Some significant development, including the Windemere Subdivision, has begun in this area. Policies to enhance this area's development potential include:

- Extending a collector road between Shore Road and 35th Avenue.

COMMUNITY FRAMEWORK

GROWTH DIRECTIONS



Lake Manawa

- Solving drainage problems, particularly in the Longs Landing area.
- Expanding and developing open space along the Missouri River.
- Completing the metropolitan area trails system, which will connect the area via Mosquito Creek to the Wabash Trace and the Valley View/Mosquito Creek Trail north to Mall of the Bluffs.

Mosquito Creek North/US 6 Interchange: This area, convenient to such critical community features as Iowa Western Community College and Mall of the Bluffs, presents a key opportunity for mixed use development. Excellent access and the adjacent community college make these sites particularly suitable for major office and business park, residential, and limited commercial development. Focuses for development include the Mosquito Creek corridor south of Iowa Western and the

corners of the US 6/I-80 interchange, once proposed for regional commercial development. The south-east and northeast corners of the interchange are most appropriate for mixed use development. The more rugged topography of the northwest corner requires conservation development techniques, clustering development at higher densities on more easily buildable parts of the site. Policies to enhance this area's substantial potential include:

- Creating a development partnership to secure, plan, and guide development of the interchange area.
- Improving the intra-urban transportation system serving the area, including extension of Valley View to College Road and improvement of College Road as a collector parkway.
- Extending sewer service to the development area.

Southwestern Development Area: This area enjoys superb interstate and railroad access and includes a number of contemporary industries, as well as high-profile facilities such as Bluffs Run. The site provides excellent opportunities for commercial, business park, and light industrial/distribution facilities, analogous to those found in the Interstate 35/80 corridor in the Des Moines metropolitan area. Parts of the site have also been proposed for substantial commercial recreation use. Policies to

promote full development in this area include:

- Creating a development partnership to assemble and market land in this area.
- Developing supporting public improvements as required.

Redevelopment Areas: Redevelopment of blighted or underutilized areas is an integral part of a growth strategy for Council Bluffs. The city's Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy defines specific redevelopment areas and strategies for the next ten years. These and other concepts are included under the theme NEIGHBORHOOD BUILDING in the strategic plan.

■ TRANSPORTATION

The transportation system is a vital component of Council Bluffs' community framework. During the 1990s, the city carried out major transportation system initiatives, some of which included:

- The construction of Nash Boulevard, improving access to Interstate 29 and the north part of the city.
- Completion of Valley View Drive between Highway 92 and McPherson Avenue.
- Reconstruction of Highway 375 between 16th Avenue and Highway 275.
- Construction of the distributor road system at the Lake Manawa Power Centre.
- Major reconstruction and rehabilitation of major segments of the city's collector and local street system.
- Construction of major segments of the city's trail system. Current links connect the Western Historic Trails Center with Lake Manawa State Park; and extend the Wabash Trace north to Valley View Park along Valley View Drive and Mosquito Creek.



Highway 375 reconstruction

TRANSPORTATION

- Securing initial funding through TEA-21 for design of the Avenue G overpass and approach routes.
- Construction of Greenview Avenue.
- Completion of the Council Bluffs Interstate System Needs Study.

Objectives and Priorities

Major objectives contained in the strategic plan for Council Bluffs' transportation framework during the next ten years include:

- Completing a comprehensive reconstruction project on the Interstate 29/80 system through the city.
- Completing a consolidation of railroad trackage through the city, eliminating redundant trackage and reducing the impact of railroads on the city and overall community traffic flow.
- Improving the efficiency of traffic flow through the city.
- Upgrading emerging corridors, such as South Omaha Bridge Road, to meet traffic demands and reinforce other community growth objectives.
- Developing a public transportation system appropriate to the changing needs and demands of Council Bluffs' population.
- Continuing construction of a comprehensive trail system to link parts of the community together.

Specific projects and policy directions for Council Bluffs' transportation framework follow.

Interstate system: Preliminary plans for widening and redesign of the interstate system have been completed. Implementation of these plans on the congested Interstate 29/80 dual route is a high priority for the city.

South Omaha Bridge Road: This two-lane road is experiencing increasing traffic and congestion, particularly with the growth of the Lake Manawa Power Centre commercial district. The road should be improved to a four-lane divided section between the Veterans Memorial Bridge and the beginning of the four-lane section at the Interstate 29 interchange. The project should include right-of-way enhancements, including landscaping, adjacent greenways, and trails to make adjacent areas more attractive for residential and commercial development.



Railroad trackage through central Council Bluffs

Railroad consolidations: The large amount of railroad trackage in the area complicates circulation and increases blighting influences on the surrounding city. Elimination of duplicative trackage is vital to improving intra-neighborhood circulation and encouraging the redevelopment of blighted areas. Components of the consolidation include:

- Combining Burlington Northern Santa Fe and Iowa Interstate trackage into a single corridor at approximately 12th Avenue.
- Consolidating Union Pacific trackage in a single corridor connecting the former Chicago & North Western north corridor to the Union Pacific main line.
- Removing the Union Pacific trackage in First Avenue west of 12th Street.
- Building segments of new trackage to link individual railroad lines to these consolidated rail arteries.
- Eliminating most on-grade crossings in favor of grade separations at 9th Avenue and an extended 16th Street.

Traffic circulation framework: The Council Bluffs Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Plan proposes a traffic circulation network that is related to the proposed railroad consolidations. Elements of this system include:

- The planned Avenue G overpass over the Union Pacific.

COMMUNITY FRAMEWORK

TRANSPORTATION

Indian Creek Parkway.

This concept would be part of a north-south corridor linking the north and south sides of the city together. In the Southside neighborhood, a true parkway would combine a trafficway, trail, and enhanced creek to create a distinctive multi-modal corridor and a major neighborhood resource.



- Extending the South Expressway and 6th and 7th Street pair to a North 8th Street alignment and to Avenue G. This realignment through the Mynster Street area should be designed to help redevelop a deteriorated neighborhood while channelling traffic away from more healthy portions of this area.
- An Indian Creek Parkway, a north-south arterial linking North 16th Street to the South End neighborhood. Grade separations would be provided over the Union Pacific north of 9th Avenue and the Iowa Interstate trackage at about 12th Avenue. This extended 16th Street arterial would follow the east side of Indian Creek.



New trail linking the Western Historic Trails Center with Lake Manawa.

- Removing the north portion of the South Expressway viaduct to provide at-grade access at 9th Avenue. When combined with railroad grade separations on 9th Avenue, this system provides greatly improved access to major industrial areas.
- Grade separating 9th Avenue and Avenue G to complement the Broadway viaduct and permit its eventual repair or replacement.
- Removing numerous at-grade crossings between Avenue G and 9th Avenue.
- Extending Dick Downing Drive as an east-west connector between 35th Street and the South Expressway.

Trail System: Work should continue on the completion of the city's portion of the Metro Area Trails Plan. Priorities include:

- Connecting Lake Manawa State Park to the Wabash Trace trailhead.
- Extending the completed Wabash Trace and Manawa Trails into the center of the city by way of the Indian Creek corridor and a new connecting route through the south side.
- Developing the Back to the River Trail, along with links back into established neighborhoods.
- Identifying and beginning development of a central trail corridor in concert with a comprehensive redevelopment plan for the West Broadway corridor. This trail may be integrated into an overall redevelopment and reuse concept for the West Broadway corridor.
- Forming a partnership with the states of Iowa and Nebraska and the city of Omaha to develop at least one pedestrian/bicycle bridge over the Missouri River. The Back to the River project is studying alternative locations for a crossing and is investigating other means of river crossings, including water taxis and trams.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Public transportation: Council Bluffs public transportation system is a scaled-back version of a fixed route transit system more appropriate for another era. As such, it is not providing people who need transit (including seniors, young people, and others who cannot or choose not to drive) with the mobility required by contemporary life. The city should establish a more flexible system, including the use of vehicles and routes appropriate to specific functions and user groups. These may include:

- Continuation of enhanced fixed route service on the city's single high-density line, the Broadway corridor between Downtown Omaha and Mall of the Bluffs.
- Flexible services, using small vehicles, in lower-density settings. These services may combine aspects of a service route, connecting major community destinations and traffic generators, with demand responsive characteristics.
- Use of different services tailored to special demands at different times of day (such as journey to jobs, services to seniors, and after-school transportation for children).

■ INFRASTRUCTURE

Council Bluffs has made substantial strides during the 1990s toward the improvement of basic infrastructure. Rehabilitation has been funded primarily through local option sales tax funds. Other work has involved:

- Development of a sanitary interceptor sewer serving the Mosquito Creek corridor.
- Securing funding for a Reconnaissance Study from the Corps of Engineers for the Indian Creek corridor. This corridor and its floodplain, which includes downtown Council Bluffs, has been one of the city's major infrastructure problems.
- Construction of four major stormwater pump stations, including the Twin Cities Plaza, Harveys, Indian Creek, and Mosquito Creek stations.
- Completion of significant improvements to the wastewater system, including construction of the

Twin Cities and Mosquito Creek lift stations; reconstruction of the 6th Avenue and 29th Avenue interceptor sewers; and increasing the legal capacity of the wastewater treatment plant.

Infrastructure Priorities



Indian Creek

Infrastructure development priorities for Council Bluffs during the next ten years include:

The Indian Creek Corridor: The flood plain status of the Indian Creek corridor creates significant obstacles for community development, including building regulatory obstacles, added development costs, and financing obstacles. The city's ultimate objective is to proceed with modifications and improvements to the Indian Creek channel which reduce the extent of the 100-year floodplain.

The current Corps of Engineers Reconnaissance Study will examine alternatives and recommend a specific course of action. Preliminary findings of this study are expected by 2000. Upon identification of a desired alternative, the city could qualify for 503 funding for engineering. Potential alternatives include:

- Reconstructing and relocating the Indian Creek drainageway to the west along with major street improvements. This provides opportunities for better drainage operation and open space development.
- Developing a retention facility to reduce flooding problems in that area. A retention basin may be developed as a site amenity to encourage innovative mixed-use development.

Continued system rehabilitation: Rehabilitation of old sewer and water lines will remain a substantial community priority during the next decade.

COMMUNITY FRAMEWORK

RECREATION AND CULTURE

Drainage issues and financing: Many areas that provide significant development opportunities are hampered by relatively poor drainage on flat topography. Solutions to these drainage problems, which may also include sculpting of the landscape, will be necessary to encourage development of significant land resources.

Financing of storm drainage improvements in areas with different needs is also a challenge. The city should complete a storm drainage master plan which will assess problems and identify solutions on a district basis. The plan would then project costs for solutions by district and establish a long-term, phased program, based on specific priority criteria. These criteria may range from the necessity to alleviate an immediate problem to opening areas up for long-term development. The plan should then be used to create a long-term, citywide financing program, which might combine regular city capital allocations with stormwater management fees in affected development areas.

Sewer extensions and development financing: Definition of strategic growth areas will help the city manage its infrastructure extension investments. In addition, the use of innovative development financing techniques, including Real Estate Investment Districts (REIDs) and benefit fee districts, may also help reduce the initial risks of subdivision development and help level the metropolitan area playing field.

Regional planning and service jurisdictions: Jurisdictional service issues involving city, county, and water districts should be worked out through a cooperative regional growth planning process. Council Bluffs Waterworks and the Rural Water District have a limit of service agreement. Since rural and urban water supplies use different types of distribution systems, the areas of services should be periodically reviewed based on long-term development trends. In addition, the city and county should identify and periodically update:

- Areas in the vicinity of the city's corporate limits that are likely to be considered for annexation.
- Areas which will receive urban services but are unlikely to be annexed.
- Areas which will operate with rural systems, primarily well or rural water and septic systems.

■ RECREATION AND CULTURE

Parks, open spaces, and greenways, while often considered public services, are also important components of the city's physical framework. Council Bluffs has made major progress since 1990 in these key elements of the urban environment, including:

- Trail development. Trails, building on the themes established by the Western Historic Trails Center, have been a major open space priority for the city.
- Harveys Recreation Complex. This major recreational facility was developed on the trails center site and provided a badly needed center for outdoor sports. In addition, the facility creates an open space and street link between Twin Cities Plaza and the main body of the city.

Objectives and priorities for the future open space framework include:

Playland Park Marina. In this concept, a marina would be developed on the site of Playland Park's soccer fields. The fields would be replaced by new facilities at Harveys Recreation Complex and other locations. A marina would take advantage of the good hydrological features of the Council Bluffs side of the river to create a major community asset and focus for future residential and commercial growth.



COMMUNITY FRAMEWORK

RECREATION AND CULTURE

Continuation of the planned trail system: This system now includes links between the Trails Center and Lake Manawa State Park, the Wabash Trace trailhead and Valley View Park, and 25th and Nash Boulevard and Big Lake Park. When complete, the system will create a series of interconnected loops that connect major open space and recreational resources and complement the city's vehicular transportation system.

Continued development of the Missouri Riverfront: Riverfront development can help link areas for potential development south of South Omaha Bridge Road and in the Lake Manawa area to the rest of the city, and connect major existing facilities such as Lake Manawa State Park, the Trails Center, Dodge Park, Playland Park, Narrows Park, and Big Lake Park. The proposed Missouri River Greenway Trail would extend from Narrows Park to Long's Landing, a distance of approximately 14 miles. The Greenway would include a connection to a pedestrian crossing, planned as part of the Back to the River program.



Bayliss Park. This traditional city square has served Council Bluffs as a center for public life.

A component of the Riverfront Development Program may include development of a marina at the site of Playland Park's existing soccer fields. The continued development of Harveys Recreation Complex and other facilities provide an opportunity for eventual development of this new center on the city's riverfront. In addition to providing an important amenity, a marina could provide substantial residential and commercial development opportunities.

Parks master plan: Council Bluffs should complete a parks master plan, inventorying the conditions and needs of existing city parks, analyzing levels of service, and proposing a phased, systematic program of park rehabilitation and facility development. The master plan should include:

- An inventory of conditions and rehabilitation needs of all existing parks.
- Development of a multi-year park rehabilitation program, based on the park inventory and priority criteria.
- An analysis of overall park system needs, based on a level of service method. This method uses geographic service, use characteristics, and facilities per population served to determine service standards and gaps.

Central Park. This project would involve the redevelopment of obsolete industrial areas in the center of Council Bluffs into a central commons for the community. The concept includes the reconstruction of the Broadway viaduct with special design features, the enhancement of the Indian Creek drainageway, and railroad relocation. The Central Park is designed to redefine the city's physical image and to link neighborhoods that are now separated by major barriers.



- A projection of park facility needs to serve new growth.
- An analysis of opportunities and resources for future park development.
- An overall park plan, combining the needs of existing parks, future development, and evolution of a growing park and open space network for the city.

A Central Park: This park would be developed in conjunction with relocation of Indian Creek and railroad relocations, would be a central node along an Indian Creek Greenway. The central open space, developed on blighted industrial sites along the city's central railroad corridor, would extend from the

COMMUNITY FRAMEWORK

RECREATION AND CULTURE



Fairmount Park. *This key open space could serve as the nucleus of a Loess Hills Urban Interpretive Network, linking the city's unique bluffs environment and historic neighborhoods together into a distinctive interpretive network.*

Broadway viaduct to 9th Avenue. It would use a trail along the proposed Indian Creek Parkway overpass over the Union Pacific to connect its components. This park redevelops seriously blighted areas in the center of the city and provides a major open space in an area that currently suffers from a shortage of parks.

Fairmount Park Restoration and the Loess Hills Urban Interpretive Network: This concept combines special natural environments, parks, and historic urban neighborhoods into a linked network that is unique to Council Bluffs. The centerpiece of the network is a restored Fairmount Park, re-establishing that park's role as a signature community open space. Preserves along the wooded hilltops and ridges and steep slopes of the Loess Hills would radiate from Fairmount Park, with hiking trails and nature corridors. This system permits development on more suitable lands in the hill environments. The linked network continues into the historic neighborhoods of Council Bluffs, providing opportunities for self-guided tours and historic and architectural interpretation. The network also incorporates smaller parks such as Sternhill, Prospect, and Lincoln Parks; and major resources such as the city's superb and historic cemeteries. The network could extend through the hills from Big Lake Park to Mall of the Bluffs.

Indian Creek Greenway. This corridor would be developed along the creek and would link the Western Trails Center and Lake Manawa with the center of the city. The greenway would be developed as part of the selected improvement option for the creek and would buffer residential neighborhoods from the Union Pacific.

Reservation of adequate parkland to serve development in developing parts of the city. A mechanism should be developed to promote reservation or purchase of parkland to serve residential growth in this area. The Community Framework Plan identifies three potential park sites in the eastern part of the city. Two of these sites can be integrated into the regional trail system by developing a trail greenway along Little Pony Creek.

CB 21: A New Community for a New Century



CORRIDORS AND COMMUNITY ENTRANCES

CORRIDORS AND COMMUNITY ENTRANCES

WEST BROADWAY

MANY RESIDENTS OF COUNCIL BLUFFS BELIEVE THAT ITS MAJOR TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS CONTINUE TO DEFINE IMPORTANT PARTS OF THE CITY'S IMAGE – AND DO SO TO ITS DETRIMENT. While the city has a vastly improved image of itself, these key corridors continue to present a negative impression to others. In addition, land along these trafficways is frequently underutilized. As a result, corridor improvements which in turn create a better environment for growth can create new development opportunities and an expanded property base.

The corridors most frequently identified for attention include:

- West Broadway, between the Interstate 480 bridge and downtown Council Bluffs.
- The South Expressway between 9th and 23rd Avenues.
- South Omaha Bridge Road from the Veterans Memorial Bridge to Interstate 29.
- 16th Street from Broadway to Interstate 29.

Highway 375 is also considered a potential enhancement corridor, although this road carries somewhat less regional traffic than the other streets. In addition to these roadway corridors, railroad corridors also have a major impact on the city's visual character and the health of adjacent neighborhoods.

■ WEST BROADWAY

During the 1990s, the West Broadway corridor has undergone major improvements, including new sidewalks bordered by contrasting pavers, burial of electric lines, and installation of new street lights. While participants in the planning process believe that these improvements have helped the street, they still consider its image to be negative. The street's status as the major entrance to Council Bluffs, its most heavily travelled arterial, and its connection to and from Eppley Airfield, make the stakes particularly high.

Specific issues along the Broadway corridor include:



Top: The Bunge grain elevators south of Broadway.



Bottom: New development along the corridor.

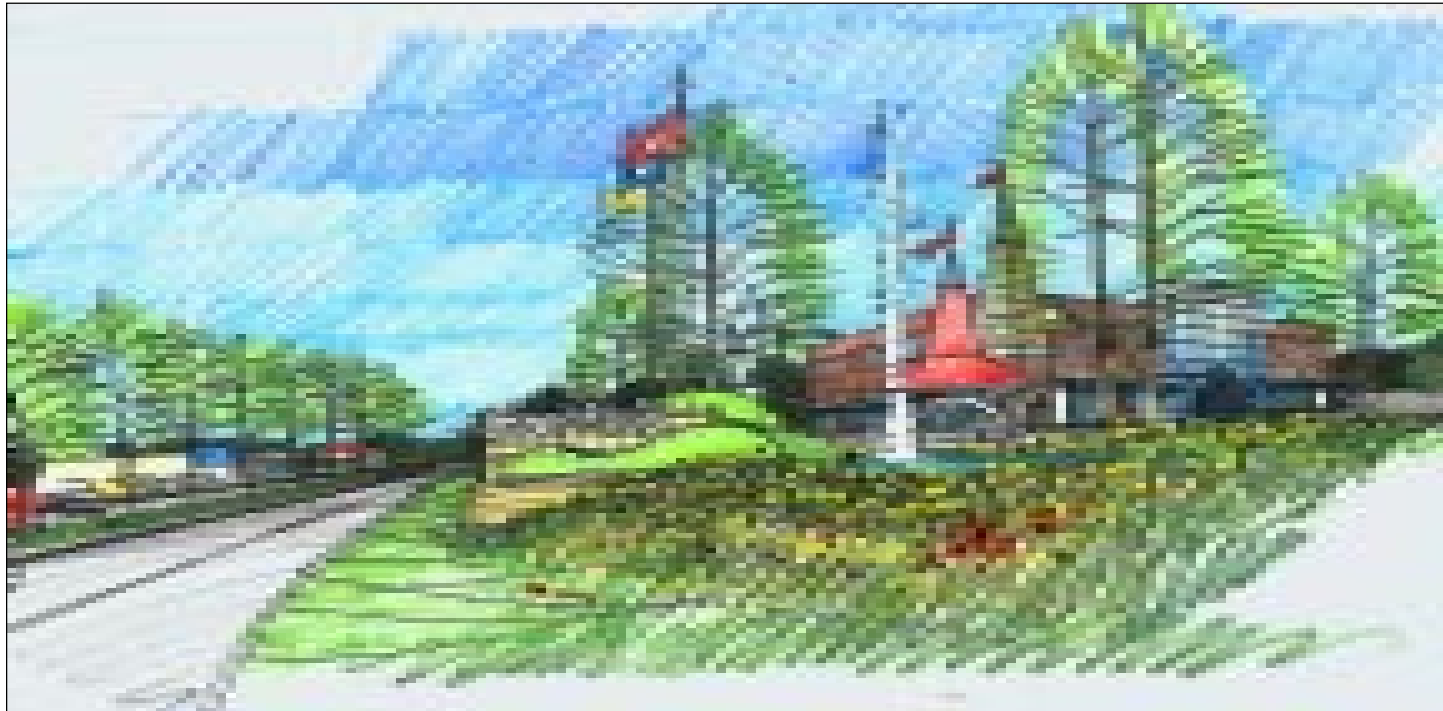
- *Unattractive entrances.* The west (36th Street) entrance feature on Broadway is generally considered to be unattractive. The feature, designed to be a temporary installation, has instead become a permanent feature that misses the opportunity to communicate with visitors.
- *Land use conflicts.* West Broadway developed as a major transportation corridor and includes a mixture of old and contemporary commercial, industrial, and office uses, along with residual residential use. Some buildings are set back, while others are developed up to the property line. This produces a series of visual and functional conflicts.
- *Underutilized sites and buildings.* Despite its developed quality, the Broadway corridor has a relatively large amount of underutilized land, along with vacant buildings. A large site at the approach to the I-480 bridge, the major entrance to the city, is unused.
- *Shallow lot depths.* The depth of development is limited along Broadway by adjacent land uses or development patterns, producing a commercial strip pattern. To the north, the predominately residential A Avenue corridor limits development to 1/2 block in depth. To the south, the adjacent 1st Avenue rail spur and the Bunge Corporation grain elevators also limit development depth.
- *A hard landscape.* While some newer commercial and office uses employ good front yard landscaping, much development includes paving up to the property line and an excessive amount of hard surfacing. This creates an unattractive and unbroken streetscape.
- *Poor maintenance standards and lack of unified "management."* The overall appearance of the corridor produces low expectations for site design and maintenance. Corridor businesses do not view themselves as a cohesive district.
- *The viaduct and railroad corridor.* The Broadway Viaduct east of 16th Street provides a view of unattractive and frequently blighted commercial and industrial areas along the central railroad corridor. The viaduct itself is narrow and will require reconstruction or replacement in the mid-term future.

Directions for enhancing the strategic West Broadway corridor include:

CORRIDORS AND COMMUNITY ENTRANCES

RECREATION AND CULTURE

West Broadway entrance. Development of a new westside entrance should include substantial, high quality mixed use development on adjacent land. The project can take advantage of its proximity to Downtown Omaha.



Gateway feature: A new entrance feature, including extensive landscaping, should be designed and developed at the west end of the street. The feature may incorporate a divided section on the street. In addition to providing a positive first message to visitors about the city, such a feature can also mark a transition from the high speed environment of I-480 to the local traffic setting of West Broadway.

Development of a gateway feature should be combined with redevelopment of vacant land and unsightly buildings at the west end of the West Broadway corridor. Appropriate development may include office buildings or a community signature feature. Actual development should be coordinated with planned changes in the interstate system, which will remove a ramp that takes eastbound traffic from the I-480 bridge to 2nd Avenue.

Business organization: A West Broadway business organization should be created, viewing the area as a business district and charged with identifying such common objectives as marketing and promotions. The business organization should act as an advocate for businesses along the corridor and may provide a mechanism for implementation of projects along West Broadway. It may also provide a catalyst for the creation of a SMID (Small Municipal Improvement District), an assessment district able to assist with the financing of installing and maintaining public improvements.

West Broadway Village: The Council Bluffs community should consider the eventual relocation of the Bunge elevators and the abandonment of the railroad spur that serves them. This could encourage

West Broadway Village. West Broadway Village envisions the eventual assembly and redevelopment of the Broadway corridor south to 2nd Avenue. The current railroad right-of-way along 1st Avenue can be converted to the spine of a lively, mixed use urban community, benefitting from its strategic location in the center of the metropolitan area.



CORRIDORS AND COMMUNITY ENTRANCES

WEST BROADWAY

large scale assembly of land as a “West Broadway Village” – a new urban development near Downtown Omaha that can include a mix of land uses (including new residential development) and fine-grained connections to the surrounding city.



The First Avenue Corridor. Relocation of the grain elevators and abandonment of the rail spur that serves them can help Council Bluffs capitalize on a major development opportunity.

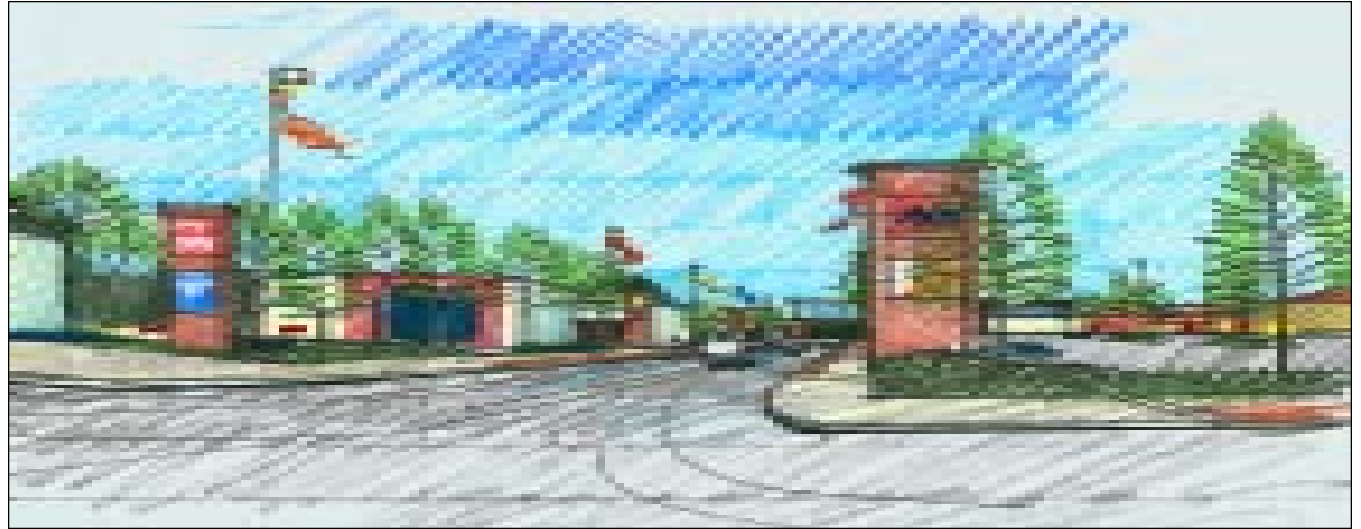
Policy components of the West Broadway Village concept include:

- Preservation of substantial commercial, office, and some industrial uses in the corridor. Land to be assembled and reused includes vacant land, grain elevators, storage yards and structures, vestigial residential uses, and other land in unproductive or marginally productive uses.
- Development of a Westside Boulevard along the former 1st Avenue railroad corridor. This boulevard may be divided for much of its length, but would be designed as an urban street, with relatively low design speeds, extensive landscaping, low-scale lighting, and parallel greenways and trails. Housing, primarily in townhouse and multi-family configurations, would be oriented to the street. Westside Boulevard would extend from about 37th Street to 16th Street/Indian Creek Parkway. Here, it would terminate at the proposed Central Park.
- Development of mixed uses along the corridor between West Broadway and 2nd Avenue. Most residential development would occur on the block of the corridor between Westside Boulevard (1st Avenue) and 2nd Avenue.
- Ultimate extension of commercial and office uses north to A Avenue. An extensive landscaped buffer along the south side of A Avenue would define a currently irregular boundary between the West Broadway commercial strip and residential uses to the north.
- Landscaping and improved sign and access control along west Broadway, as discussed below.

Site assembly and a Broadway Development Corporation: A Broadway Development Corporation should be created as an avenue for encouraging unified development along the corridor according to the West Broadway Village concept. The corporation would gradually acquire parcels that fit the profile for

Landscaping on West Broadway.

While West Broadway has undergone significant improvements during the 1990s, much of the basic streetscape remains unattractive. Landscaping on private property along the street can improve its appearance without limiting either parking or access to adjacent properties. A Landscape Land Trust may be created to maintain landscaped areas to uniform, high quality standards.



eventual redevelopment and package them for redevelopment. It would also establish standards for site and architectural design.

A Landscape Land Trust: A detailed corridor plan should examine the function of sites and site design along the corridor. Where paved areas are unnecessary, steps should be taken to encourage unified front yard landscaping. This may take the form of a landscape land trust. Using this device, a non-profit corporation, probably the proposed Broadway Development Corporation, would purchase or take out a long-term lease for strips of land to be improved along front property lines, complete landscape improvements, and establish a maintenance fund or endowment.

Traffic management: Traffic management, accomplished in close partnership with corridor businesses, can improve the safety and function of the corridor. Devices may include access management and use of side streets for parking, business access, or open space. Such a management program can also improve adjacent residential areas.

Viaduct replacement: Replacement of the Broadway Viaduct should include special design features,

CORRIDORS AND COMMUNITY ENTRANCES

SOUTH EXPRESSWAY

including lighting, railings, and structural features, which can make the link between the corridor and downtown distinctive. The Broadway Viaduct will eventually cross over the proposed Central Park as well as the railroad corridor. Its design themes may reflect both of these influences. The viaduct should also provide good accommodations and safe approaches for bicycle and pedestrian traffic.

■ SOUTH EXPRESSWAY

The South Expressway links Interstate 29/80 and the growing Lake Manawa Power Center commercial district with the traditional core of the city. The expressway between 9th and 17th Avenue is on an elevated structure above surrounding industries and railroad trackage. As a result, the corridor provides a “hard” view of the Council Bluffs cityscape. This sense is countered by the backdrop of the Loess Hills to the east and the downtown landscape to the north.



The South Expressway. This right-of-way provides substantial opportunity for landscape improvement.

The elevated design of the South Expressway limits the ability of surrounding landscaping to block industrial views. Directions for improving the character of the South Expressway include:

Entrance features: A community entrance feature may be developed north of the Interstate 29/80 interchange. This should reflect themes consistent with other features, such as those proposed along West Broadway.

Landscaping: Improved landscaping should be used along the surface portion of the Expressway. This can help buffer the Southside neighborhood from the expressway corridor as well as improve the appearance of this arterial. In addition, the commercial corridor between the I-29/80 interchange and South Omaha Bridge Road should have improved landscaping and sign standards. The right-of-way section along this strategic portion of the corridor is sufficient to accommodate substantial landscaping.

Viaduct improvements: Design improvements along the expressway viaduct, including lighting features and railings, can help improve the experience of driving along the road.

SOUTH OMAHA BRIDGE ROAD

Redevelopment of adjacent areas: Long-term redevelopment of blighted areas south of 9th Avenue and their redevelopment into contemporary uses is proposed by the strategic plan. The most appropriate land use for these sites is light industrial, benefitting from excellent access to the interstate system.

Grain elevator relocation: While a lower priority than relocation of the Bunge elevators in the West Broadway corridor, the relocation of the Peavy elevator provides significant access improvements and redevelopment potential. This area can be served by extending 23rd and 29th avenues eastward into a loop. The Wabash Trace extension also passes through this parcel.



■ SOUTH OMAHA BRIDGE ROAD

South Omaha Bridge Road corridor is a two-lane principal highway (US 275 and Iowa 92) and features a mixed development pattern characteristic of an urban fringe. The community structure component of the strategic plan identifies this corridor as a substantial growth area. The development of areas such as Fox Run, if successful, will produce economic pressures that will ultimately upgrade these urban fringe uses.

Public policy should reinforce improving market trends in this area. These policies include:

South Omaha Bridge Road. Improvement of this facility as a parkway can provide a central spine for the emergence of a “new community” in the southwestern part of the city.

Entrance features: In common with the Broadway and South Expressway corridors, an entrance signage program should be implemented at corridor entrances.

Parkway development: Widening the highway should also include corridor enhancements, upgrading the road to parkway standards. Components should include a central landscaped median and adjacent greenways and trails.

Land use and development standards: Design standards for new development along the corridor should be implemented by the city, establishing criteria for landscaping, signage, and site design.

CORRIDORS AND COMMUNITY ENTRANCES

NORTH 16TH STREET

■ NORTH 16TH STREET

North Sixteenth Street is a principal entrance to the city center from southbound Interstate 29 and is a segment of a proposed north-south arterial and parkway that continues south to Lake Manawa. The corridor now displays a mixture of residential and commercial uses. Policies for upgrading this major entrance corridor include:

Streetscape: Improved streetscape, including lighting and landscaping, and pedestrian accommodations, along the corridor. In some cases, this may require acquisition of property.

Focused and revitalized commercial development: Major commercial growth should focus on the North Park shopping center area, south of Nash Boulevard, and a neighborhood commercial cluster at 16th and Avenue G. Other “strip” development along the corridor should be gradually phased out. The emergence of the Avenue G corridor when the viaduct is completed makes higher quality commercial development more attractive at that intersection. A rehabilitated North Park Center should include trail connections, parking lot landscaping, improved pedestrian accommodations, and building upgrades.



The North 16th Street Corridor.

Gateway feature: A thematic gateway feature, consistent in theme with those proposed for other key community entrances, should be developed near the Nash Boulevard intersection.

Avenue G viaduct: With completion of an Avenue G viaduct, with a link to the 6th/7th Street pair, Avenue G will function as a gateway into the city center. Appropriate treatments include boulevard design of Avenue G at 16th Street and design of a distinctive physical gateway feature.

CB 21: A New Community for a New Century



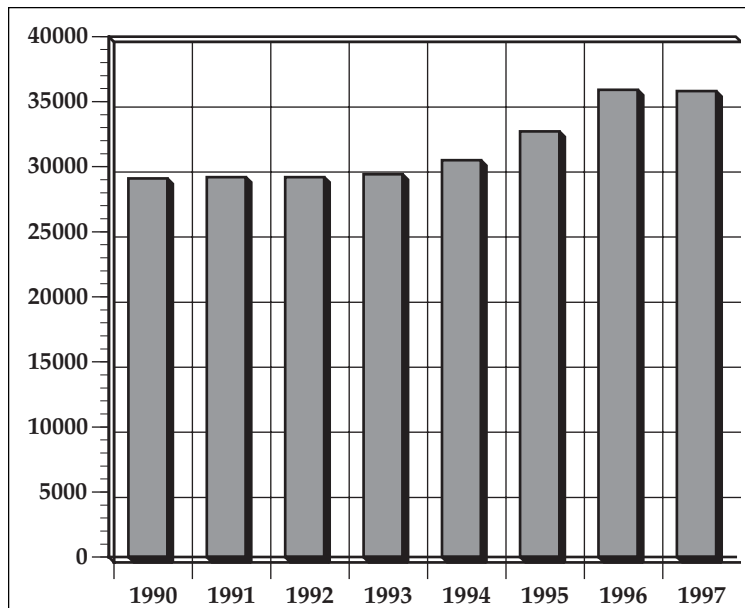
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

PROGRESS

COUNCIL BLUFFS' ECONOMY AND JOB BASE HAS EXPERIENCED DYNAMIC CHANGES DURING THE 1990s. The city has benefitted from the continued health of the metropolitan area economy. In addition, it has experienced substantial development in several key sectors:

- **Job Growth.** Employment in Pottawattamie County has grown substantially between 1990 and 1997. During that period, the county's economy, led by Council Bluffs, has produced about 6,700 new jobs, a 23% increase in employment. The service sector has accounted for about two-thirds of this job growth, although most sectors have experienced employment increases during this decade. The county's September 1998 unemployment rate was 2.4%.



Pottawattamie County Job Growth since 1990. The county added 6,700 new jobs between 1990 and 1997, a growth of 23%.

- **Retail growth.** The development of Mall of the Bluffs in the 1980s and the Manawa Power Centre area during the 1990s has resulted in substantial growth as the city has moved from exporting to importing consumer dollars. Increasingly, the city has become a retail destination for southwest Iowa and important parts of the Omaha region. As a result, Council Bluffs has displayed the highest rate of retail growth among major Iowa cities during the 1990s. Taxable retail sales have grown by about 70.5% in Council Bluffs between 1990 and 1997.

- **Tourism.** The opening of the Bluffs Run, Harveys, and Ameristar casinos and hotels, along with the development of other visitor attractions such as the Western Historic Trails Center, has dramatically increased the size of the city's tourist industry.

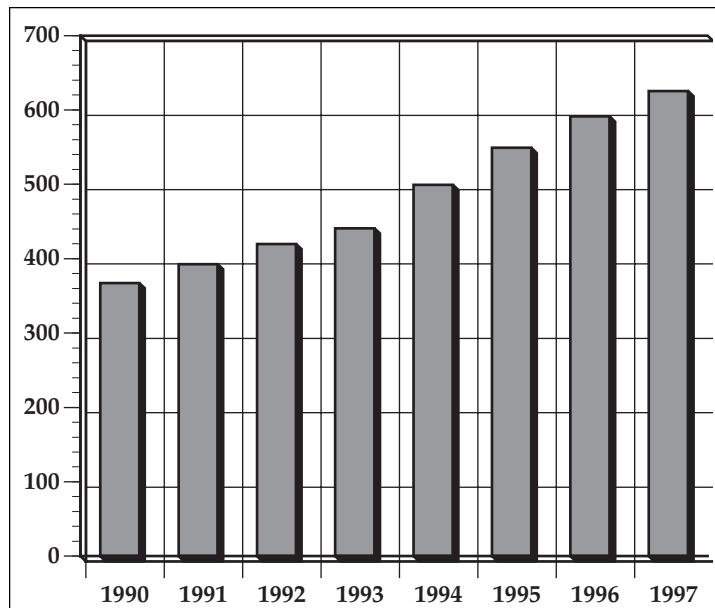
- **Agricultural Industry.** Major growth has included the expansion of the ConAgra installation on South Main Street and the development of the Bunge Corporation facility near the Pottawattamie/Mills County boundary.

In 1998, the University of Northern Iowa's Institute for Decision Making completed an economic development plan for the Council Bluffs Area Chamber of Commerce. This plan included a five-year growth strategy that identified strategic directions for future economic development policy.

■ ISSUES

Key economic issues for Council Bluffs during the next ten years include:

- *Workforce development and retention.* Council Bluffs, like other parts of the metropolitan area, experiences a shortage of skilled workers. Despite extensive partnerships between the community's school districts, Iowa Western Community College, and the business community, skill training remains a challenge. In addition, Council Bluffs exports workers to Omaha. A recent study by the Metropolitan Area Planning Agency indicated that 46% of the city's workforce is employed across the Missouri River. Workforce development transcends skill training to include other key community issues, including housing availability, quality of life, and community marketing – all issues addressed in other parts of the strategic plan.



Taxable Retail Sales in Council Bluffs (in \$ millions) 1990-1997. The city has been Iowa's fastest growing major retail market since 1990.

- *A lack of quality business and office park facilities.* In an economy increasingly oriented to technology, information, and services, much of Council Bluffs' development base remains industrial. Both the Omaha and Des Moines metropolitan areas have experienced substantial business park development, including traditional office facilities, information technology facilities, and "flex" buildings which have characteristics of both office and light industrial and distribution facilities. Council Bluffs' lack of such a development has restricted its participation in this area of significant development and employment growth.

- *Lack of stable economic development funding and staffing.* The Council Bluffs community has periodically assembled significant resources to encourage business expansion and recruitment. However, this financing has occurred on an intermittent basis, responding to individual appeals. Additionally, the Chamber of Commerce provides staffing for development efforts such as the Pottawattamie County Development Corporation, in addition to its basic member services. This tends to stretch staff and limits the capacity to administer major development efforts.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

DIRECTIONS

- *Industrial transition.* Much of Council Bluffs' traditional base of heavy industry has contracted, leaving acres of underused or blighted industrial land. These property resources are generally provided with city services and infrastructure and should be used to greatest advantage.
- *Intergovernmental cooperation.* The Bunge facility represents a substantial investment in rural industry. Continued development outside the city limits will nevertheless require city supporting services, including wastewater and public safety services. If city resources and capacity are dedicated to serving rural development, the city's growth is hampered. As a result, economic development policy increasingly requires city / county cooperation and joint planning.
- *Changing development priorities.* Traditionally, industrial recruitment was the core of economic development policy. However, labor shortages and fierce competition make successful recruitment of large industries, the proverbial economic development "home run," less likely and local economic strength makes it less necessary.

■ DIRECTIONS

Directions for economic development policy in Council Bluffs include the following:

Retention and expansion of existing businesses and industries: Business retention and expansion should become the highest priority for economic development policy. Employment training, requiring a continued close partnership between Iowa Western Community College, the city's school systems, and the business community, is a vital part of this effort. Other components of a local business and retention strategy include:

- Relationship building, providing ongoing contacts among individual businesses, the chamber and economic development sector, and government. The outcome of this process should be to build a community of interest and partnership among the city's various sectors, and to provide a quick response mechanism to the reasonable needs of community businesses.
- Providing and communicating an inventory of buildings and sites for expansion, permitting local businesses to expand within Council Bluffs.



Land at US 6/I-80 interchange.

Excellent transportation access, high visibility, and adjacency to Iowa Western creates an excellent opportunity for research and business park development.

- Providing technical assistance to businesses, including awareness of loans, tax credits, and other economic incentive programs to finance business growth.
- Aggressively marketing Council Bluffs internally as a place mobilized to help its local business resources expand and increase profitability and market reach.

Increased cooperation among community sectors: The regional implications of economic development require increased partnerships and joint planning among governmental subdivisions and with the private sector. This includes establishing a cooperative land use and infrastructure planning process between city and county, affecting the areas within a five-mile radius of the city. This may also include developing a cooperative approach to future annexation and extension of necessary city services to support industrial development.

Resource development: The business community, through the agency of PCDC or another development corporation, should develop a regularly funded and predictable business development program. Funds should be allocated according to specific objectives and an investment plan, updated periodically by the corporation. In addition, the development corporation should have adequate staff support, dedicated solely to completing substantial projects.

Business/office park development: The lack of a high quality business setting is limiting Council Bluffs' participation in this important area of economic expansion. The COMMUNITY FRAMEWORK section addresses potential locations for such facilities. Probable priorities include:

- Office/research park development as part of a mixed use development at the Interstate 80/US 6 interchange. The city should avoid fragmented development at this strategic location, which might prevent development from achieving its full economic potential. In order to assure optimum long-term development, the community should develop and implement a long-term master plan for growth at the interchange and should manage and market this development through an appropriate public or private entity.
- A business park, including office and distribution uses, near Interstate 29/80 in the southwest-

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

DIRECTIONS

ern quadrant of the city and east of the Manawa Power Centre. This type of development should follow such models as the North Park Business Park in Ankeny and office/distribution developments along the I-35/80 corridor in Urbandale. Improvements to the Interstate 29/80 corridor will encourage development in this area.

- Small business development as part of a “West Broadway Village” redevelopment in Council Bluffs’ central corridor. This area provides excellent access to Downtown Omaha and supports corridor redevelopment efforts.
- Light industrial development on the site of the former Council Bluffs Municipal Airport, southeast of the Manawa Power Centre and adjacent to the I-29/US 275 interchange. This site enjoys excellent transportation access and is insulated from residential development.

Entrepreneurial development: Growth of new business will be an important priority for Council Bluffs. Establishing the city as a nurturing location for new business can encourage new investment and help Council Bluffs recreate its economy. Components of such an effort include:

- A small business development program, including providing seed capital funding and technical assistance. Part of this program may include matching prospective entrepreneurs with private investment sources. The community may complement this effort with an incubator building if necessary.
- Targeted business development education for specific types of industries (including construction), provided by IWCC and local educational centers. This included identifying spin-off opportunities based on the region’s existing industrial base.
- Providing affordable sites and locations for small businesses.

Business recruitment: The community should continue its recruitment efforts, but on a highly targeted basis. Programs which cast a wide net have relatively low expectations of success.

Capitalizing on Centers of Excellence: Council Bluffs as a community should enhance existing centers of

strength and form partnerships to improve their competitive posture. For example, health care is a traditional area of strength in the city and is rated highly by residents. The city is in the unusual situation of having two competitive hospitals, each affiliated with a regional health system based in Omaha. By increasing partnerships and working as complementary organizations, these two institutions may be able to strengthen Council Bluffs' independent status as a major regional health center. This in turn increases the potential for health-related economic growth.



Mercy Hospital. The city's two major hospitals provide the potential for a cooperative center of excellence, providing opportunities for growth in health services.

Support services and image development: Community systems are highly inter-related. Thus, providing a diverse supply of housing and neighborhoods is also an important economic development tool. Projects which increase community quality and convenience also make Council Bluffs increasingly competitive to both businesses and workers. In a significant way, the entire strategic plan is also an economic development plan; implementation of its recommendations place the city in a better position to grow across all fronts.

Increased development capacity and improved relationships with regional developers: Despite an increasingly active development market, Council Bluffs lacks a local, large-scale commercial developer. As a result, most substantial development in the city is executed by Omaha developers or other out of-town entities that are active in the region. At times, these developers will place a higher priority on marketing properties and development opportunities in their home cities. The city should

implement a program to strengthen relationships with Omaha realtors and developers to build "top of-mind" awareness of sites and development markets in Council Bluffs. This program may include ongoing contacts and tours of specific sites and buildings with selected metropolitan area realtors and developers. In the long-term, the community should encourage the creation of one or more substantial scale development entities focused on Council Bluffs, potentially as a spin-off opportunity for a major Omaha developer or Realtor.



CB 21: A New Community for a New Century



EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING AND FINANCE

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING AND FINANCE

PROGRESS

EDUCATIONAL ISSUES CONTINUE TO BE VITAL TO CITIZENS OF COUNCIL BLUFFS. Community residents give high ratings to both local school districts and Iowa Western Community College. However, the 60% bond issue approval requirement has made financing of school infrastructure difficult.

However, the 1990s brought significant steps toward the financing of school facilities. After three unsuccessful efforts, the Lewis Central School District successfully approved a facility bond issue that will meet its needs into the mid-term future. The Council Bluffs Community School District also approved bonds that financed major rehabilitation at three major school facilities, including the Carter Lake and Franklin elementary schools and Wilson Junior High School.



Iowa Western Community College

Educational institutions have also expanded the range of offerings and programs available to the community and continued a focus on educational programs oriented toward specific needs. These included:

- Continuing partnerships between Iowa Western Community College, other educational systems, and the local business community. These partnerships have blurred the line between high school and higher education and have integrated skill training into the secondary school curriculum. Iowa Western has maintained and expanded programs which utilize state funding to finance employee education in support of economic development efforts and opened a downtown Council Bluffs presence at the Omni Business Centre. In addition, the community has increased access to distance learning and maintains a number of facilities with fiber optic linkages.
- Expansion of early childhood educational opportunities. The Even Start program has successfully served preschool children with an economically and educationally disadvantaged parent. Even Start includes educational programming for both parent and child. In addition, each K-12 entity in the city provides all-day kindergartens. Council Bluffs educational providers have focused on providing a continuum of services, beginning with early childhood.
- Major community programs to improve community literacy and expand English as a second language programs.

- Expansion of programs targeted to students with specific needs. These have included the Kaneshville Alternative High School program for students at risk for leaving school, the Honors-Early Start program for college-bound students, and the Tucker Center for vocational education.
- Expanded local access to four-year degrees through Buena Vista College. This program allows students to live in Council Bluffs while earning a bachelors degree from BVC.

■ ISSUES

Despite this real progress, Council Bluffs' educational systems face important challenges as they enter the next century. These include:

- *A growing polarity between advantaged and disadvantaged students:* The evolution of the community, including major public investments and local and metropolitan economic growth, has improved the quality of life for many residents. Increasing technology and access to resources have also increased achievement levels of a significant share of the student body. At the same time, the gap between those who are enjoying these benefits and those who are not are increasing. Both school systems report increases in the percentage of students on assisted meal programs, a major indicator of household poverty in the schools. In the Council Bluffs Community School District, about 40% of students receive subsidized lunches, up from 24% a decade ago.
- *Poorer pre-school preparation:* School district officials report that more children are relatively unprepared to begin kindergarten. This is attributable to a variety of influences, ranging from single-parent households, working parents, lack of intellectual stimulation, and the media. This creates serious long-term problems for the quality of the city's students and ultimately its workforce.
- *Diversity:* More than one-half of Iowa's population growth during the last ten years has been generated by international in-migration. In Council Bluffs, this trend leads to increasing demand for ESL programs and for efforts which fully integrate new arrivals into the city's educational systems.
- *Educational facility finance:* Council Bluffs Community Schools has identified about \$55 million in needed facility improvements. Many of these needs include such basic requirements as

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING AND FINANCE

ISSUES

heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems. Traditional general obligation bonds, with their 60% approval requirement, are difficult to pass.

Iowa Western also faces significant facility finance issues. The college's facilities levy is capped at 20.25 cents, about 15% of the permitted school district levy. IWCC has accumulated an extensive backlog of maintenance needs. In addition, it is experiencing full utilization of all facilities. These problems limit the school's ability to start new programs and could require a future admissions cap. The college has identified \$15 million in needed facility improvements.

- *Labor force training.* Education is highly integrated into the welfare of the individual and community-wide economy. The availability of a skilled workforce is an essential condition for economic growth, particularly in the sector of new enterprise development. Identifying and training for career niches are also important educational functions. The regional economy is creating better paying jobs, but these jobs in turn require more precise skills training. To date, many training programs have been reactive, rather than pro-active – training for a specific need generated by a large local industry.

Funding issues present significant challenges for this critical area. As a result of low state funding and restrictions on property taxes levied by community colleges, Iowa Western has been forced to eliminate some current programs before adding new ones. In 1993, the college district's voters approved a levy for the purchase of instructional equipment, permitting the updating of many programs. However, financial constraints will cause updates to be spread over a ten-year period. Additionally, expensive technology is needed to provide training for high skill/high wage jobs. Adequate funding is needed to permit the college to respond to the training needs of existing and prospective industries.

- *Shortages of instructors.* Both existing shortages and upcoming faculty retirements during the next ten to fifteen years will create significant challenges for all of Council Bluffs' educational systems.

■ DIRECTIONS

Council Bluffs' educational challenges are not unique to the city. However, the community has developed a tradition of educational partnerships among institutions that has led to innovative programming. Future directions for the community may include:

Educational facility finance: Developing a reliable source of financing for current and ongoing facility improvements is an important priority. The Council Bluffs' district's master facilities plan places a priority on purely functional infrastructure – electrical and mechanical systems, building envelope, safety and traffic flow, and communications systems – and only rarely addresses educational enhancements. Yet, evolving technology and changing standards and expectations will require ongoing investments in school facilities. In addition, community growth is beginning to generate a demand for new schools in growth areas, particularly in the southeastern part of the city. The traditionally hard-fought, difficult to pass bond issue approach is increasingly unable to provide this source of reliable, long-term funding.

In addition to traditional bond issues, the district is investigating fiscal plant and equipment bonds, which finance improvements on a “pay as you go” basis and a countywide local option sales tax for educational facilities and rehabilitation. Woodbury County recently passed such a measure.

Early childhood preparation: The increasing gap in pre-school preparation is a serious long-term community challenge and will require a significant community effort to develop solutions. For economically disadvantaged households, programs that involve parental education as well as preschool attendance for children should be expanded. The community should also develop an environment that encourages private entrepreneurs and service providers to become involved in this area. The school systems may establish preparation standards for these providers.

A comprehensive career education program: In common with most school systems, the Council Bluffs systems tend to follow a college preparatory model for all students. Part of this is a response to class parental expectations or societal pressures. The Tucker Center High School, a joint venture between IWCC and the Council Bluffs Community Schools, is a step toward integrating skill training into a secondary school curriculum.

Along with early childhood preparation, a comprehensive career education program involves a community-wide effort that begins to break down traditional boundaries between the city's educational and business sectors. Components of a program may include:



Tucker Center. This facility is a cooperative career training venture involving Council Bluffs Community Schools and Iowa Western.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING AND FINANCE

DIRECTIONS

- Identifying and marketing long-term career opportunities to both students and parents. The large amount of publicity given to information technology has identified this area to families as an ongoing career opportunity, leading to the popularity of technology magnets in the metropolitan area. However, there are a variety of other continuing opportunity areas, such as construction crafts, health services, industrial maintenance, and many other areas. These markets may provide a basis for educational program concentration. Yet, students are often unaware of these opportunities or of programs which feed them. As a result, jobs go unfilled, programs are unattended, and potential employees remain underemployed. Business and industry should increasingly become partners in the educational process. Specifically, industries should identify and market their positions, skill needs, and career opportunities to students and families, beginning these connections at an early age.
- Developing a regional career center that transcends school district boundaries. Such a center would involve a partnership of the public, parochial, and community college systems. It should be reinforced by transportation that allows easy movement between the center and existing schools.
- Integrating community resources into the school systems. Professionals working in the larger community represent a wealth of specialized knowledge and experience. These resources may be integrated into the school systems as adjunct faculty. Cooperation by industries and businesses is necessary to free top-line staff on a limited basis for such prime time services. However, this may prove to be a highly productive investment in building a future skilled employee base.
- Tech-Prep Programs. The community should consider innovative career training approaches, such as a fully integrated Tech-Prep program. Such a program provides for the faculties of the community school district and the community college to work cooperatively to develop an articulated six-year curriculum. This plan ideally provides a seamless transition into high technology courses at IWCC after appropriate high school preparation, which includes career exploration and workforce preparation modules.
- Expanding school-to-work and mentoring/internship programs.

Increased community utilization of the Iowa Western campus: The community college is a critical community resource, but is working to increase its visibility to expand its student base. Programs and activi-

ties which integrate the college's campus into the life of the city can help the institution expand its roles in the community. The construction of the new performing arts center on campus will increase both use and awareness of the campus by the non-student community.

Greater institutional and organizational flexibility: Rapid change calls for rapid response and adjustment by educational systems. Yet, this response and flexibility is restricted by structures of rules and relationships that been erected over a long period of time. Both administration and faculty should investigate ways in which they can respond to changing needs without threatening the long-term structure of tenure and security that governs the system. Some of these include:

- Creating a master-teachers designation, with added compensation for demonstrated excellence.
- Adding a compensated training component to the school year. The number of classroom hours would remain constant. However, a period would be added to the work year specifically for training and knowledge enhancement.
- Enhancing job quality to encourage skilled people to enter teaching as a career. Recruitment will become a pressing issue as more existing teachers approach retirement.

Schools as community centers: Council Bluffs neighborhood schools act as anchors for their geographic areas. This historic role can be strengthened for the benefit of both residents and neighborhoods by extending the utilization of school buildings to meet educational, community, and even recreational programming needs throughout the day on a year-round basis. The evolution of schools as community centers will require increased city-school district partnerships, including partnering on facility finance and operations. The Cedar Rapids PATCH program, borrowing from similar efforts in Great Britain, provides a prototype for expanding the role of the schoolhouse as a neighborhood center.



CB 21: A New Community for a New Century



PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

ISSUES

COUNCIL BLUFFS IS AFFECTED BY SOCIAL TRENDS COMMON TO BOTH URBAN AND RURAL IOWA. Despite a decade of considerable economic growth on both a regional and national scale, a society free of needs remains far from a reality. Indeed, the prosperity of the 1990s seems to bring increasing contradictions as well. Many observers speak of a growing stratification between “haves” and “have nots.” While a growing number of children begin school with a high level of skill, an increasing number are also unprepared to enter kindergarten. Problems of drug use, youth crime, homelessness and near-homelessness, and household violence continue to challenge the community.

Certainly, these problems are not unique to Council Bluffs. However, Council Bluffs brings a high degree of awareness and a strong tradition of building partnerships to address social concerns. The city has a wide array of service providers, boasting committed staff and a high degree of cooperation. These groups also enjoy a strong relationship with city government. This coalition of groups is in the process of developing seven units of transitional housing.

■ ISSUES

Key issues that challenge Council Bluffs as it considers policies to address populations with special needs include:

- *Economic and cultural stratification among the population.* The city’s quality of life has improved substantially for many of its residents. Unemployment is low and the city has benefitted from its own growth and that of the metropolitan region. However, community progress appears to have left some groups behind, increasing the disparity between people with resources and people without. The city has a substantial low-income population, and the school systems note a growing percentage of students on subsidized lunch programs.
- *Demand for child care.* The movement of low-income families off welfare and the continued prevalence of two-earner households have increased the need for quality day care. Yet, early child care is both scarce and expensive. For a variety of reasons, record numbers of children are entering kindergarten unprepared, despite ubiquitous information and resources.
- *Diversity.* New jobs and population growth may involve the introduction of new ethnic groups into

the city. The city must mobilize to integrate new groups into the population and the city's institutions.

- *Neighborhood anchors and youth activities.* In Council Bluffs, as elsewhere, lack of access to after-school activities creates problems. Neighborhood support structures seem to be lacking, as are anchor institutions and community centers, which create a base of activities for young people.



The Council Bluffs YMCA. The "Y" is a major center for family-oriented activities.

- *Senior services.* A growing senior population has requirements which outstrip the capacity of the existing senior center. As a result, development of a new senior center with more space and service facilities has become a significant community priority. However, access to services remains a problem, requiring a new type of transportation system.

- *Senior housing.* A large demand exists for low-cost senior housing. This demand is likely to grow with the expiration of subsidized mortgages and conversion of these assisted units to market-rate rentals.

- *Affordable housing.* Organizations which assist people with severe needs report a serious lack of affordable housing. Rental housing in the city is both scarce and expensive, although it is frequently in relatively poor repair. The concept of rebuilding families begins with the home.

- *Poor linkages to the business community.* Social service providers have excellent relationships with each other and with city government. However, they have relatively little access to major contributors in the city. Greater private/nonprofit partnerships are needed to build support for agencies.

■ DIRECTIONS

In addressing social needs, Council Bluffs, like any community, cannot solve every problem and must establish strategic focuses. Likely focuses for attention during the next ten years follow:

Neighborhood centers with youth focuses: The development of a unified and comprehensive youth program, including components of recreation, service, skill development, family support, and personal

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING AND FINANCE

DIRECTIONS

enrichment is a high priority for the community. Such a program, based in a neighborhood setting, may follow the Boys and Girls Club, settlement house, or YMCA models. Development of a municipally owned and operated recreation center with these programmatic components may be a basic part of this system, complementing private, nonprofit providers such as the YMCA. Another alternative, proposed elsewhere in this plan, is a “schools as community centers” approach, making school facilities the activity centers and anchors of neighborhoods. In this model, a partnership between school districts and the city can extend utilization of schools and use buildings as the focus for a variety of educational, recreational, and community activities. A city-operated recreation center may be developed as an addition to a school site or located independently at a site with good access to school facilities. Other components of a neighborhood center approach may include:

- Youth involvement in the community. Young people should be organized as a force for good in the community, with their energy channeled into the repair of their urban environment. Youth community service programs can combine recreational, spiritual, volunteer, and economic components. The experience of CJ Futures in Council Bluffs indicates the power of this concept. By involving youth at risk in providing service to people with specific needs for assistance, this agency redefines the roles of young people, transforming them from recipients of attention to helpers in the community.



Public transportation service. Metro Area Transit provides service on a fixed route basis in the city. However, more flexible types of services may be needed to meet the specific needs of transit-dependent people.

- Transportation. To some degree, lack of participation in activities is an issue of access. The transportation system should be restructured to provide access to community resources for the young. An appropriate transportation system may be task oriented, providing services tailored to specific needs at different times of the day, rather than a “fixed route” system that follows the same route all day on a scheduled basis.

Child care. Child care is a critical issue for Council Bluffs, given the high percentage of working households. Yet, day-care facilities in the city suffer from high staff turnover. Attempts to raise salaries for day-care workers result in higher costs, putting day care out of reach for many who most need the services. Quality day-care should be viewed as a high economic development priority – not specifically for the jobs it creates, but for the economic self-sufficiency and childhood preparation that it offers.

Community policy should encourage employers or groups of employers to establish child-care facilities. Private and public resources should be devoted where necessary toward the establishment of child-care programs.

Senior center and housing: Council Bluffs should develop an expanded senior center to form a base for programs for older adults. A priority should also be placed on the development of affordable housing for seniors, particularly if a substantial number of current affordable rental units are converted to market rate occupancy. This can be accomplished by recruitment of development groups and providing resources and support necessary to produce affordable rents; or creation of a new development corporation to meet specific housing priorities.

The senior center project should also include a residential component, strengthening the role of the center as a focus for community. In Council Bluffs, the senior center should avoid becoming an enclave for seniors. Instead, it can also provide opportunities for inter-generational programming, involving seniors in other aspects of the life of the city and providing opportunities for service and education.

Transportation: Many service providers view transportation to services as a major priority, but also believe that the city's current fixed route service does not provide adequate mobility to transit-dependent people. A restructuring of the system to meet contemporary needs should be completed. The system may complement a central, high-volume line with flexible services using smaller vehicles.

Affordable housing: Standard, affordable housing to replace existing stock that is too high in cost and too low in quality is a high priority. The community should develop a mechanism to deliver affordable rental housing, as well as transitional, rent-to-own units. Housing initiatives are described more fully in the HOUSING section.

Additional housing resources should also be developed for groups with especially severe housing needs. These include:

- A new shelter for victims of domestic violence. City government has committed \$100,000 to developing a new shelter.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING AND FINANCE

DIRECTIONS

- Transitional housing to serve the near homeless transitioning between shelters and permanent settings.
- Single room occupancy (SRO) housing.

An alliance between service providers and community contributors: The success of cooperative efforts by service providers require stronger connections to people whose charitable contributions have traditionally supported community efforts. Service providers must demonstrate that their efforts are part of a coordinated policy to improve the overall health of the community. In turn, contributors must see the work of organizations as vital to other development efforts.

A corollary of this process involves the development of a human services master plan and an ongoing annual operations plan by service agencies. This process should use the strong cooperative structure created by the city's Human Services Advisory Council to develop and communicate a comprehensive approach that identifies common interests and priorities. This type of tool is invaluable to large funders and helps to define specific project needs and concentrations. It also demonstrates the many dimensions and service specializations of providers within the city.



The historic former Council Bluffs Public Library.

CB 21: A New Community for a New Century



HOUSING

HOUSING

ISSUES

COUNCIL BLUFFS HAS MADE MAJOR STRIDES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HOUSING DURING THE 1990s. At the beginning of the decade, the city produced only about 2% of total housing starts in the metropolitan area, with annual construction below 100 units. By the end of the decade, Council Bluffs accounts for about 8% to 9% of total metro housing construction, typically building between 300 and 400 units. In addition to a marked increase in overall development activity, Council Bluffs has:

- Carried out a substantial amount of affordable, single-family construction through a partnership between the Community Housing Investment Corporation (CHIC), the City of Council Bluffs, and private builders. With financing assistance from the city's Community Development Block Grant, CHIC acquires lots in established neighborhoods and conveys them to builders who in turn develop affordable housing. CHIC now accounts for about 20 home starts annually.
- Completed the first local developments using Iowa's Real Estate Investment District (REID) mechanism. Through REIDs, bonds are issued for public improvements in subdivisions, which are in turn paid back through special assessments on properties.
- Became part of a metropolitan area consortium for HOME funds with Omaha, making additional resources available for affordable housing development.
- Completed apartment projects using Section 42 low income housing tax credits.



***Housing rehabilitation.** Council Bluffs maintains an active rehabilitation program, using Community Development Block Grants as a primary financing tool.*

■ ISSUES

Despite this considerable progress, which has helped Council Bluffs achieve parity with other metropolitan area communities, housing development remains an important community priority. Issues faced by the city include:

- *Housing affordability.* Affordability remains a primary issue, particularly with a continuing scarcity of standard rental housing. Housing in relatively poor condition commands monthly rents in excess of

\$600, creating great difficulties for low-income households. Although CHIC and Section 42 programs have produced some affordable housing in recent years, the city's large moderate-income population generates a demand for more production.

- *Housing condition.* A significant portion of the city's housing stock is in relatively poor condition, particularly true of the supply of older rental housing. These condition problems place a heavy load on the city's housing inspection program. While Council Bluffs has an active housing rehabilitation program, it has experienced difficulty in marketing rehabilitation loans.



- *Local development capacity.* Most developers active in Council Bluffs are Omaha developers. With some notable exceptions, the city lacks a body of large developers whose primary focus is the east side of the Missouri River. This makes it somewhat more difficult for the city to form private/public development partnerships. In addition, Council Bluffs lacks a Community Development Corporation (CDC), a nonprofit development corporation capable of completing priority projects that are not done by conventional developers. In contrast, seven CDCs are at work in Omaha; these groups complete a range of affordable ownership, rental, and transitional housing developments, many of which are programmatically appropriate to Council Bluffs as well.

- *Infrastructure finance.* Subdivision development in critical growth areas requires development of interceptor sewers and, in some cases, solution to storm drainage problems. Public resources for these improvements are scarce, requiring the city to attempt to direct growth into areas that will produce the greatest return per dollar of public investment. In addition, new tools such as REIDs will continue to be used in Council Bluffs. By reducing the amount of individual exposure to developers, REIDs help to compensate for Sanitary and Improvement Districts, a device that has financed much suburban development in the metropolitan Omaha area.

- *People with severe needs: the homeless and near homeless.* Adequate housing is a fundamental need for people in Council Bluffs with special needs. Particular areas of concern include very low-income families, single males, and victims of domestic abuse. A coalition of cooperative agencies has emerged

DIRECTIONS

in Council Bluffs, providing an opportunity to develop a unified program.

■ DIRECTIONS

In order to meet housing development challenges during the next ten years, Council Bluffs should move in the following directions:

Community Development Corporation: The City should encourage the creation of a community-based development entity, a Community Development Corporation (CDC). A CDC may be developed in concert with a lenders consortium, which can provide a shared risk financing mechanism for development projects. Unlike CHIC which as currently constituted is limited to acquiring properties and passing them through to builders, a CDC has the capacity to develop its own projects. Ideally, CHIC would evolve into a CDC, although other corporations may also emerge. Areas of special concentration should include:

- Affordable rental rehabilitation and development. In addition to acting as a developer, the CHDO may act as a general partner, raising equity through the sale of tax credits to limited partners. Housing developments should be targeted to both families and seniors.
- Urban subdivision development, focusing on the North 8th Street, Katelman Pool, and Indian Creek West development areas, identified in the city's Neighborhood Reinvestment Strategy. The city may participate in infrastructure development through CDBG funds or through TIF for income-qualified development.
- New residential construction in major redevelopment areas. Some of these focus areas are identified in the NEIGHBORHOOD BUILDING section.
- Rent-to-Own development. This new project type builds single-family houses for rental to low-income households, ultimately transitioning these owners to homeowners. It combines short-term housing solutions with achievement of economic self-sufficiency.

Rental rehabilitation program: Given the condition of some of the city's rental housing stock, rental

rehabilitation becomes a significant priority. Most rental properties are small structures, owned by individual investor-owners. A leveraged loan program, combining CDBG/HOME funds with private funds to reduce debt service costs is well-suited to this type of owner and permits property upgrades while minimizing rent increases. The city should establish a small property rental rehabilitation program on a pilot basis. In addition, the city should work with a CHDO or CDC to finance rehabilitation of rental properties.



Enhanced code enforcement: Council Bluffs should strengthen its rental code enforcement program. The initiation of PAR officers in neighborhoods can help, although community police officers are most likely to focus on exterior code violations. Additional code enforcement officers, coupled with streamlined legal procedures, could strengthen the city's ability to provide its residents with standard housing. Code enforcement also requires a backup rental rehabilitation program, to provide financing if needed to maintain housing affordability.

Single-family rehabilitation: Rehabilitation financing is currently focused toward low-income households, utilizing community development block grant funds to provide direct, 100% financing to property owners. The city could expand its rehabilitation output by the use of a leveraged loan program, combining private loan funds with CDBG/HOME funds to reduce effective interest rates. In addition, marketing programs should connect these opportunities to property owners, using area civic, religious, and neighborhood organizations.



Community marketing and development capacity: The community should work to encourage the growth of one or more local developers, capable of residential and commercial development from a Council Bluffs perspective. In addition, the city should maintain a strong marketing relationship with metropolitan area developers, identifying opportunities and opening growth areas with strategic infrastructure investments.

Housing for people with special needs: Council Bluffs' service organizations oriented to the housing needs of people with special and emergency housing needs should

HOUSING

DIRECTIONS

organize into a formal housing coalition. This coalition should develop a united capital program, identifying priority projects and an implementation schedule. This coalition should form a unified point of contact with potential community contributors. Specific focuses may include transition housing, SRO housing, an emergency shelter, and cooperative projects with a CDC.

- Infrastructure finance program: Infrastructure finance is an important issue as Council Bluffs faces conflicts between investments for growth and repair of existing infrastructure. A possible solution is the development of benefit districts, by which front-end investments that open areas for new development are paid back through fees on development in the benefitted area. This technique is particularly applicable to interceptor sewers and stormwater management projects which open large areas to development.

In subdivisions developed within the city and not subject to district-wide infrastructure, Council Bluffs should consider using special assessments as a method of installing public improvements. Using this technique, the city either installs improvements or has the developer construct improvements subject to city supervision and cost control. This mechanism reduces a developer's front-end exposure and helps compensate for the relatively low costs associated with rural subdivision development.

CB 21: A New Community for a New Century



NEIGHBORHOOD BUILDING

NEIGHBORHOOD BUILDING

FOCUSES FOR ACTION

MOST REDEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN COUNCIL BLUFFS' RECENT HISTORY HAVE OCCURRED DOWNTOWN. The city's largest single public sector redevelopment projects have been Midlands Mall, completed in the late 1970s, and the Redlands office building project, completed during the late 1980s. During the 1990s, the city successfully addressed many community challenges, including the completion of the new public library, new reinvestment in infrastructure and park and transportation facilities, major increases in housing production, improvement of the West Broadway corridor, and extensive commercial development. This positions the city to address major neighborhood redevelopment needs.

Nevertheless, the city has made significant progress in its neighborhood development initiatives during the 1990s. These have included:

- Major advances in downtown development, including the successful reuse of Midlands Mall as Omni Business Centre, the completion of the new public library and Main Street streetscape project, and some adaptive reuse in the Historic Haymarket District.
- The successful rehabilitation of the Playland Park neighborhood. This ongoing effort has combined rehabilitation, funded through CDBG funds, and public improvements to create a model for successful neighborhood revitalization.
- Successful rehabilitation and infill development in the South Side neighborhood. South Side has been a successful residential rehabilitation area and has been a focus for infill residential construction through the efforts of the Community Housing Investment Corporation (CHIC).

■ NEIGHBORHOOD BUILDING: FOCUSES FOR ACTION

A focus of attention for Council Bluffs during the next ten years will be the rebuilding of blighted areas. Some of the areas most in need of attention are highly visible from major routes, linking neighborhood reconstruction with issues of image and urban design. Similarly, the rebuilding of blighted areas involves construction of affordable housing. Thus, neighborhood development represents an intersection of many of the themes in the strategic plan.



Top: 9th Avenue Industrial District.
Bottom: Mynster Street.

Priority areas for action include:

The deteriorated industrial district from 9th Avenue to 16th Avenue, including the South Expressway corridor: This obsolete industrial area is divided by extensive railroad trackage. Railroad consolidation frees a substantial development parcel which can be used for upgraded industrial or business park development. Business park or industrial development may include "flex" buildings which combine aspects of office and limited industrial use. Site development standards should be adopted which require good landscape and building design, low-scale signage, and multi-modal connections to surrounding areas. This area benefits from adjacency to the expanding ConAgra industrial campus east of the South Expressway.

The Tinley area, north of downtown: The area south of Children's Square displays some of the city's worst housing conditions. The planned Avenue G viaduct and its connection to 6th and 7th Street will also have a major impact on the neighborhood, involving the acquisition of as many as 40 to 50 houses.

This substantial public works project provides the city with an opportunity to consider the long-term reconstruction of an obsolete neighborhood. Long-term redevelopment may involve emergence of a redeveloped "urban village," providing a variety of housing types in this near downtown neighborhood. The planning of the area must be closely coordinated with the routing of connections between the South Expressway and the Avenue G. The design and routing of these linkages should serve both neighborhood development and transportation needs. Parts of the neighborhood around and north of Children's Square are appropriate for rehabilitation. New construction is an option at certain locations, including North 8th Street and Avenue J.

Redevelopment of the Tinley neighborhood as an urban village must also include services to residents, providing a comprehensive physical and social approach to neighborhood development.

The Downtown core district: Downtown comprises a variety of specific sub-neighborhoods, each of which requires a unique strategy. Downtown's personality will increasingly be that of a mixed use center, combining residential, civic, office, and neighborhood service and specialty retailing. Significant components of a downtown effort include:

NEIGHBORHOOD BUILDING

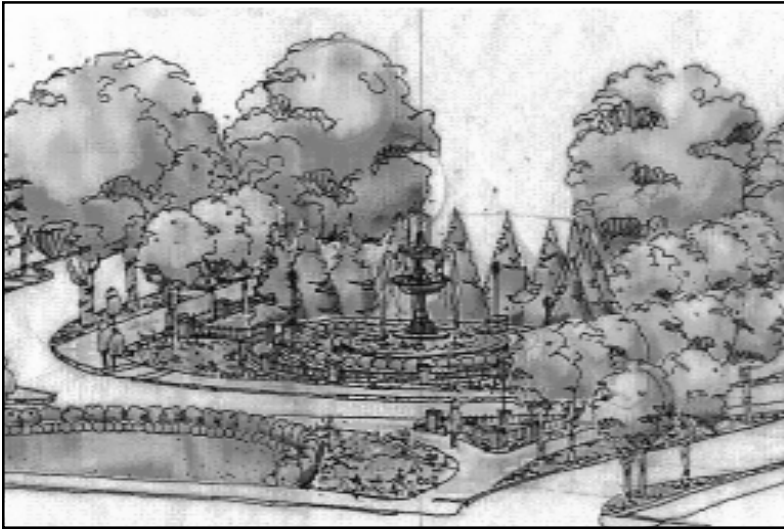
FOCUSES FOR ACTION



- Extension of streetscape treatment into other parts of the district, including the Omni Centre area and surviving historic commercial blocks along Broadway east of 1st Street. The design of Broadway should be modified along with streetscape development to strengthen the special district character of this street segment and enhance its pedestrian business district character. In contrast to the higher speed through traffic of parallel Kanesville Boulevard, Broadway should provide a more leisurely, “Main Street” experience.

Broadway at First Methodist Church. This portion of Broadway combines the character of Main Street with the European quality of an “outdoor room” defined by the distinctive church. Extension of the streetscape program to this area should recognize the pedestrian quality of this part of the street. Redevelopment on the south side should take advantage of the grade change between Broadway and parallel Pierce Street.





Downtown Entrance. Development of a special feature at Main and Pearl will provide a distinctive focus for the center of downtown. This feature can help “glue” the diverse districts that coalesce to form the city’s core. Courtesy Ciaccio Dennell Group.

- Redevelopment of the south side of Broadway to Pierce Street, east of 1st Street. Major redevelopment should utilize the topography of the site to create a mixed use project. Redevelopment here can increase downtown commercial and residential space and form a bridge between downtown and surrounding residential neighborhoods. Other strategic redevelopment sites include Vine Street between 1st and 2nd Streets, an underused site northeast of the Omni Centre, and the vacant Ervin Building.
- Continued adaptive reuse and development in the Haymarket area. Haymarket’s building quality and street layout provide an intimate scale that provides opportunities for specialty retailing, restaurants, and entertainment, in addition to residential and office development.
- Adaptive reuse of the historic Council Bluffs Public Library. Adaptation of this building to office uses, potentially accommodating the additional space needs of county government and the school district, maintains public access and puts the building to productive and economical use.
- Downtown entry feature. The acquisition and demolition of the FirstStar Bank site between Main and Pearl south of Broadway provides an opportunity for a highly visible signature statement for this unique city center district.
- Senior Center. The Council Bluffs Senior Center proposes a mixed use development between 7th and 9th Avenues on the west side of South Main. This project, incorporating a new senior center with substantial recreational and fitness components and senior housing, would provide an important anchor for the south end of the downtown district.
- Post office. The current post office customer parking and mail drop site is inadequate and provides a very poor flow of traffic. The Post Office should consider redesign of this facility, separation of the retail mail function to a site with better access, or ultimate relocation.

NEIGHBORHOOD BUILDING

FOCUSES FOR ACTION

The Sunset Park/Katelman Pool district: This area provides a significant opportunity for new residential growth. An urban renewal plan and district will be necessary for land assembly and public infrastructure development. Improvements to drainage will be required to promote redevelopment in this area.

The West Broadway corridor: With future removal of the 1st Avenue railroad, this corridor can develop as an improved, mixed-use central corridor for the city. Railroad removal increases the depth of the south side of Broadway, providing opportunities for alternatives to commercial strip development. The existing West Broadway Urban Renewal Plan should be revised to reflect current economic conditions and proposed projects. This is considered more fully in the CORRIDOR AND COMMUNITY

A new neighborhood at Sunset Park . Vacant or underused land north of Sunset Park and Katelman Pool provides an excellent opportunity for the development of affordable housing. Design styles should be consistent with the traditional quality of other houses in the neighborhood.



ENTRANCE section.

The Central Railroad Corridor: This includes land under and adjacent to the West Broadway viaduct between 8th and Indian Creek south of Broadway and 13th and 14th Streets north of Broadway. Railroad consolidation is a linchpin for complete redevelopment of this central corridor. Revitalization to the north is a continuation of rebuilding of the Tinley neighborhood, while a new Central Park south of the viaduct can remake the physical image of the city and tie previously separated neighborhoods together. While full redevelopment of these railroad lands may not be feasible within the next ten years, the community should aggressively encourage railroad consolidation and should move on opportunities to acquire sites in the corridor when available.

The North 16th Street corridor: This corridor anticipates clustering of neighborhood commercial development at important nodes, including Avenue B, Avenue G, and the North Park Shopping Center. Parkways with new or rehabilitated residences and good street landscaping should be developed between these commercial nodes. An urban renewal plan and district will be necessary for land assembly and public infrastructure development.

Of these strategy areas, priorities for completion during the next ten years include:

- The South Main industrial district.
- The Tinley / Downtown West areas.



CB 21: A New Community for a New Century



MOVING TOWARD CB-21

COMPONENTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

THIS DOCUMENT PRESENTS AN AMBITIOUS, IF FOCUSED, PROGRAM THAT CAN RESULT IN THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW COMMUNITY IN COUNCIL BLUFFS. The city's last community futures plan, *A Vision of Community*, provided a useful tool to a committed public and private sector who used it as an agenda for action. On the other hand, the community did not develop an ongoing mechanism for monitoring guidance under the plan.

Many of the recommendations in this document are highly specific and ambitious multi-year projects that, if fully implemented, can change the face of the city. Central Park, West Broadway Village, the South Omaha Bridge Road growth corridor, and business park development at the I-80 and US 6 interchange, to name several, are complex, long-term programs that can produce massive rewards for the city. However, complex concepts, without careful management and unified action, can remain concepts and never be transformed to reality. As a result, a process for management must be developed to assign priorities and be sure that the separate agencies are moving together toward the plan's implementation. The intent of this section is to sketch the outline of this management process.

■ COMPONENT ONE: A PLAN MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

Implementation of the plan will require a management structure to help assemble partnerships and monitor the plan's progress. This structure will help to unify efforts and assure that energy is focused on specific goals and accomplishments.

An extension of the Steering Committee that was organized to coordinate this planning process may be the appropriate body to carry out this process. The Committee represented key participants in both the public and private sector, and included people who were directly involved with project implementation. The Committee's work should include:

- An initial, detailed review of the plan's directions and establishment of priorities and specific responsibilities. In many ways, the management committee's hardest work begins with the completion of this agenda for the future.
- Assembly of the partnerships necessary to carry out priority projects.

- A semi-annual review of progress made under the plan, using information provided by the Issue Groups discussed below.
- An annual review and update of the plan, to assure that the plan's directions remain appropriate to community needs and resources.

■ COMPONENT TWO: ISSUE GROUPS

It is impossible for a single management group to remain connected to all the organizations and individuals who might have activities related to the CB-21 Plan. We recommend forming seven initial Issue Groups, organized around each of the issue areas presented in the plan. The Issue Groups, composed of members with special expertise or involvement in the specific area of concern, will assemble information for progress review and will help to coordinate efforts by various agencies toward common ends. The Issue Groups are an extension of the specialized working groups who were involved in the preparation of this document.

In addition to providing information to the Management Committee, the Issue Groups help to provide ongoing communications among line agencies and organizations. This level of coordination will be particularly important because of the complexity of many projects proposed in this document, requiring extensive involvement by both the private and public sectors.

■ COMPONENT THREE: THE IOWA WEST FOUNDATION

Although many corporations and charitable foundations have provided substantial financial support for community initiatives in Council Bluffs, the Iowa West Foundation, capitalized by a share of casino proceeds, has emerged as the city's leading benefactor of community improvement efforts. In addition to its annual granting program, the Foundation is also building an endowment to build a predictable source of grants and program-related investments into the future. Iowa West is essential to the financing and implementation of many of the initiatives proposed in the plan. In many cases, these financings will be carried out in cooperation with other funding sources, including various levels of government and the private sector.

MAKING PROGRESS TOWARD CB-21

COMPONENTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Multi-year projects involve multi-year commitments. In many cases, initial investments in project areas assemble land, build infrastructure, and involve other actions which do not produce immediate results. For example, the Central Park project may take many years before enough land is acquired and improvements made to fulfill the vision of the overall concept. Because of its visibility as a funding source, organizations with worthy projects in the city naturally gravitate to Iowa West and requests for funding routinely exceed resources. Because of this, it is very possible for a major foundation to use all of its resources on projects with immediate results, and never be able to move toward a broader vision of major community development.

How can a major foundation satisfy both short- and long-term needs and demands? One answer lies in recognizing the validity of a number of requests and allocating funds on an annual basis for projects based on size and time frame of request. For example, the Foundation may establish specific categories for small, medium, large, and continuing projects. Continuing projects include multi-year commitments to major community development initiatives – projects of the scope of West Broadway Village or Central Park. A specific annual allocation should be established for these activities, based on a financing program developed by project sponsors. The remaining funds would be allocated for shorter-term efforts by size of request. For example, funding categories may be established for requests of less than \$100,000, \$100,000 to \$1 million, and over \$1 million. Naturally, the Iowa West Board would reserve the right to reallocate funds among categories, depending on volume and quality of requests. A small grant program may also encourage the organization of neighborhood groups by providing a source of funds for implementing neighborhood-based projects.

Iowa West should also use the plan as a tool to evaluate competitive proposals. Thus, preference may be given to projects that are connected to implementing a direction either recommended by this current plan or identified in the future by the Management Committee. This can assure that the future planning and project proposals of organizations move toward addressing identified community priorities.

■ COMPONENT FOUR : THE PLAN AS A POLICY TOOL

The community plan should serve as a policy-making tool for the various agencies that participated in its preparation. Indeed, much of the success of the *Vision of Community* process resulted from this kind of use. The plan should be integrated into the city's capital improvement program and provide a basis

for initiating new programs or continuing current effective policies. Similarly, the plan should help other organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Human Services Advisory Committee, form both short- and medium-term work programs.

A key value of a well-maintained community plan is its ability to act as a rudder for the community development process, regardless of who might be steering the ship at any given time. Establishing agreed-upon values and goals is particularly important for long-term projects, which might cross the tenure of office of both elected officials and organizational executives.

It is the hope of all who were involved in this planning process that this document is improved and embellished over time and becomes a guide to the growth of a greater community in Council Bluffs.

